











THE  
L I V E S  
OF THE MOST EMINENT  
ENGLISH POETS;  
WITH  
CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS  
ON THEIR  
W O R K S.

By SAMUEL JOHNSON.

*Thomas H. Hinde.*



---

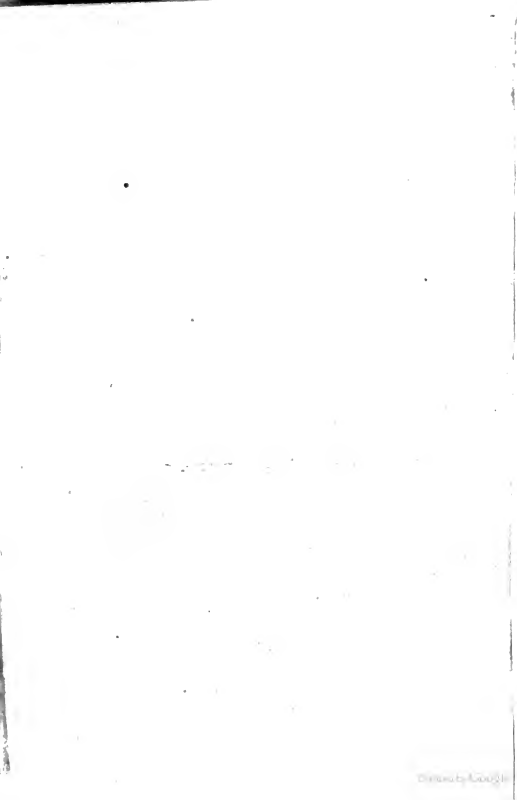
VOLUME I.

---

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR C. BATHURST, J. BUCKLAND, W. STRAHAN, J. RIVINGTON AND SONS, T. DAVIES, T. PAYNE, L. DAVIS, W. OWEN, E. WHITE, S. CROWDER, T. CASLON, T. LONGMAN, B. LAW, C. DILLY, J. DODSLEY, J. WILKIE, J. ROBSON, J. JOHNSON, T. LOWNDEN, C. ROBINSON, T. CADELL, J. NICHOLS, E. NEWBURY, T. EVANS, P. ELMSLY, J. RIDLEY, R. BALDWIN, G. NICOL, LEIGH AND SOTHERBY, J. BEW, M. CONANT, W. NICOLL, J. MURRAY, S. HAYES, W. FOX, AND J. BOWEN.

M DCC LXXXI.



## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

**T**HE Booksellers having determined to publish a Body of English Poetry, I was persuaded to promise them a Preface to the Works of each Author; an undertaking, as it was then presented to my mind, not very extensive or difficult.

My purpose was only to have allotted to every Poet an Advertifement, like those which we find in the French Miscellanies, containing a few dates and a general character; but I have been led beyond my intention, I hope, by the honest desire of giving useful pleasure.

In this minute kind of History, the succession of facts is not easily discovered; and I am not without suspicion that some of Dryden's works are placed

in wrong years. I have followed Langbaine, as the best authority for his plays; and if I shall hereafter obtain a more correct chronology, will publish it; but I do not yet know that my account is erroneous.

It had been told me, that in the College of Physicians there is some memorial of Dryden's funeral, but the intelligence was not true; the story therefore wants the credit which such a testimony would have given it. There is in Farquhar's Letters an indistinct mention of it, as irregular and disorderly, and of the oration which was then spoken. More than this I have not discovered.

Dryden's Remarks on Rymer have been somewhere printed before. The former edition I have not seen. This was transcribed for the press from his own manuscript.

As this undertaking was occasional and unforeseen, I must be supposed to have engaged in it with less provision of materials than might have been accumulated by longer premeditation. Of the later writers at least I might, by attention and enquiry, have gleaned many particulars, which would have diversified and enlivened my Biography. These omissions, which it is now useless to lament, have been often supplied by the kindness of my friends; and great assistance has been given me by Mr. Spence's Collections, of which I consider the communication as a favour worthy of publick acknowledgment.





## C O N T E N T S

O F T H E

## F I R S T V O L U M E.

COWLEY,	-	-	-	-	p. 1
DENHAM,	-	-	-	-	103
MILTON,	-	-	-	-	123
BUTLER,	-	-	-	-	269
ROCHESTER,	-	-	-	-	297
ROSCOMMON,	-	-	-	-	313
OTWAY,	-	-	-	-	333
WALLER,	-	-	-	-	343
POMFRET,	-	-	-	-	429
DORSET,	-	-	-	-	433
STEPNEY,	-	-	-	-	441
PHILIPS,	-	-	-	-	447
WALSH,	-	-	-	-	475

COWLEY.



---

C O W L E Y.

---

VOL. I.

B



---

---

## C O W L E Y.

**T**HE Life of Cowley, notwithstanding the penury of English biography, has been written by Dr. Sprat, an author whose pregnancy of imagination and elegance of language have deservedly set him high in the ranks of literature; but his zeal of friendship, or ambition of eloquence, has produced a funeral oration rather than a history: he has given the character, not the life of Cowley; for he writes with so little detail, that scarcely any thing is distinctly known, but all is shewn confused and enlarged through the mist of panegyrick.

ABRAHAM COWLEY was born in the year one thousand six hundred and eighteen. His father was a grocer, whose con-

dition Dr. Sprat conceals under the general appellation of a citizen; and, what would probably not have been less carefully suppressed, the omission of his name in the register of St. Dunstan's parish, gives reason to suspect that his father was a sectary. Whoever he was, he died before the birth of his son, and consequently left him to the care of his mother; whom Wood represents as struggling earnestly to procure him a literary education, and who, as she lived to the age of eighty, had her solicitude rewarded by seeing her son eminent, and, I hope, by seeing him fortunate, and partaking his prosperity. We know at least, from Sprat's account, that he always acknowledged her care, and justly paid the dues of filial gratitude.

In the window of his mother's apartment lay Spenser's *Fairy Queen*; in which he very early took delight to read, till, by feeling the charms of verse, he became, as he relates, irrecoverably a poet. Such are the accidents, which, sometimes remembered, and perhaps sometimes forgotten, produce that particular designation of mind, and propensity for some certain science or employment,

ment, which is commonly called Genius. *Probable*  
 The true Genius is a mind of large general *cause of*  
 powers, accidentally determined to some par- *what is*  
 ticular direction. The great Painter of the *deem*  
 present age had the first fondness for his art *Genius*  
 excited by the perusal of Richardson's treatise.

By his mother's solicitation he was admitted into Westminster-school, where he was soon distinguished. He was wont, says Sprat, to relate, "That he had this defect in his  
 "memory at that time, that his teachers  
 "never could bring it to retain the ordinary  
 "rules of grammar."

This is an instance of the natural desire of man to propagate a wonder. It is surely very difficult to tell any thing as it was heard, when Sprat could not refrain from amplifying a commodious incident, though the book to which he prefixed his narrative contained its confutation. A memory admitting some things, and rejecting others, an intellectual digestion that concocted the pulp of learning, but refused the husks, had the appearance of an instinctive elegance, of a particular provision made by Nature for literary politeness.

But in the author's own honest relation, the marvel vanishes: he was, he says, such "an enemy to all constraint, that his master never could prevail on him to learn the rules without book." He does not tell that he could not learn the rules, but that, being able to perform his exercises without them, and being an "enemy to constraint," he spared himself the labour.

Among the English poets, Cowley, Milton, and Pope, might be said "to rise in numbers;" and have given such early proofs, not only of powers of language, but of comprehension of things, as to more tardy minds seems scarcely credible. But of the learned puerilities of Cowley there is no doubt, since a volume of his poems was not only written but printed in his thirteenth year; containing, with other poetical compositions, "The tragical History of Pyramus and Thisbe," written when he was ten years old; and "Constantia and Philetus," written two years after.

While he was yet at school he produced a comedy called "Love's Riddle," though  
it



it was not published till he had been some time at Cambridge. This comedy is of the pastoral kind, which requires no acquaintance with the living world, and therefore the time at which it was composed adds little to the wonders of Cowley's minority.

In 1636, he was removed to Cambridge, where he continued his studies with great intenseness; for he is said to have written, while he was yet a young student, the greater part of his *Davidis*; a work of which the materials could not have been collected without the study of many years, but by a mind of the greatest vigour and activity.

Two years after his settlement at Cambridge he published "*Love's Riddle*," with a poetical dedication to Sir Kenelm Digby; of whose acquaintance all his contemporaries seem to have been ambitious; and "*Naufragium Joculare*;" a comedy written in Latin, but without due attention to the ancient models; for it is not loose verse, but mere prose. It was printed, with a dedication in verse to Dr. Comber, master of the college; but having neither the facility of a

popular nor the accuracy of a learned work, it seems to be now universally neglected.

At the beginning of the civil war, as the Prince passed through Cambridge in his way to York, he was entertained with the representation of the "Guardian," a comedy, which Cowley says was neither written nor acted, but rough-drawn by him, and repeated by the scholars. That this comedy was printed during his absence from his country, he appears to have considered as injurious to his reputation; though, during the suppression of the theatres, it was sometimes privately acted with sufficient approbation.

In 1643, being now master of arts, he was, by the prevalence of the parliament, ejected from Cambridge, and sheltered himself at St. John's College in Oxford; where, as is said by Wood, he published a satire called "The Puritan and Papist," which was only inserted in the last collection of his works; and so distinguished himself by the warmth of his loyalty, and the elegance of his conversation, that he gained the kindness and confidence of those who attended the King,  
and

and amongst others of Lord Falkland, whose notice cast a lustre on all to whom it was extended.

About the time when Oxford was surrendered to the parliament, he followed the Queen to Paris, where he became secretary to the Lord Jermin, afterwards Earl of St. Albans, and was employed in such correspondence as the royal cause required, and particularly in cyphering and decyphering the letters that passed between the King and Queen; an employment of the highest confidence and honour. So wide was his province of intelligence, that, for several years, it filled all his days and two or three nights in the week.

In the year 1647, his "Mistress" was published; for he imagined, as he declared in his preface to a subsequent edition, that "poets are scarce thought freemen of their company without paying some duties, or obliging themselves to be true to Love."

This obligation to amorous ditties owes, I believe, its original to the fame of Petrarch,  
I who,

who, in an age rude and uncultivated, by his tuneful homage to his Laura, refined the manners of the lettered world, and filled Europe with love and poetry. But the basis of all excellence is truth: he that professes love ought to feel its power. Petrarch was a real lover, and Laura doubtless deserved his tendernefs. Of Cowley, we are told by Barnes, who had means enough of information, that, whatever he may talk of his own inflammability, and the variety of characters by which his heart was divided, he in reality was in love but once, and then never had resolution to tell his passion.

This confideration cannot but abate, in some measure, the reader's esteem for the work and the author. To love excellence, is natural; it is natural likewise for the lover to solicit reciprocal regard by an elaborate display of his own qualifications. The desire of pleasing has in different men produced actions of heroism, and effusions of wit; but it seems as reasonable to appear the champion as the poet of an "airy nothing," and to quarrel as to write for what Cowley  
2 might

might have learned from his master Pindar to call the "dream of a shadow."

It is surely not difficult, in the solitude of a college, or in the bustle of the world, to find useful studies and serious employment. No man needs to be so burthened with life as to squander it in voluntary dreams of fictitious occurrences. The man that sits down to suppose himself charged with treason or speculation, and heats his mind to an elaborate purgation of his character from crimes which he was never within the possibility of committing, differs only by the infrequency of his folly from him who praises beauty which he never saw, complains of jealousy which he never felt; supposes himself sometimes invited, and sometimes forsaken; fatigues his fancy, and ransacks his memory, for images which may exhibit the gaiety of hope, or the gloominess of despair, and dresses his imaginary Chloris or Phyllis sometimes in flowers fading as her beauty, and sometimes in gems lasting as her virtues.

At Paris, as secretary to Lord Jermin, he was engaged in transacting things of real  
impor-

importance with real men and real women, and at that time did not much employ his thoughts upon phantoms of gallantry. Some of his letters to Mr. Bennet, afterwards Earl of Arlington, from April to December in 1650, are preserved in "Miscellanea Aulica," a collection of papers published by Brown. These letters, being written like those of other men whose mind is more on things than words, contribute no otherwise to his reputation than as they shew him to have been above the affectation of unseasonable elegance, and to have known that the business of a statesman can be little forwarded by flowers of rhetoric.

*Just  
remark  
upon  
Little  
writing*

One passage, however, seems not unworthy of some notice. Speaking of the Scotch treaty then in agitation :

"The Scotch treaty," says he, "is the  
"only thing now in which we are vitally  
"concerned; I am one of the last hopers,  
"and yet cannot now abstain from believing,  
"that an agreement will be made: all people  
"upon the place incline to that of union.  
"The Scotch will moderate something of  
"the

“ the rigour of their demands; the mutual  
 “ necessity of an accord is visible, the King  
 “ is persuaded of it. And to tell you the  
 “ truth (which I take to be an argument  
 “ above all the rest) Virgil has told the same  
 “ thing to that purpose.”

This expression from a secretary of the present time, would be considered as merely ludicrous, or at most as an ostentatious display of scholarship; but the manners of that time were so tinged with superstition, that I cannot but suspect Cowley of having consulted on this great occasion the Virgilian lots, and to have given some credit to the answer of his oracle.

Some years afterwards, “ business,” says Sprat, “ passed of course into other hands;” and Cowley, being no longer useful at Paris, was in 1656 sent back into England, that, “ under pretence of privacy and retirement, “ he might take occasion of giving notice of “ the posture of things in this nation.”

Soon after his return to London, he was seized by some messengers of the usurping powers,

powers, who were sent out in quest of another man ; and being examined, was put into confinement, from which he was not dismissed without the security of a thousand pounds given by Dr. Scarborow.

This year he published his poems, with a preface, in which he seems to have inserted something, suppressed in subsequent editions, which was interpreted to denote some relaxation of his loyalty. In this preface he declares, that " his desire had been for some " days past, and did still very vehemently " continue, to retire himself to some of the " American plantations, and to forsake this " world for ever."

From the obloquy which the appearance of submission to the usurpers brought upon him, his biographer has been very diligent to clear him, and indeed it does not seem to have lessened his reputation. His wish for retirement we can easily believe to be undissembled ; a man harrassed in one kingdom, and persecuted in another, who, after a course of business that employed all his days and half his nights in cyphering and decyphering,



ing, comes to his own country and steps into a prison, will be willing enough to retire to some place of quiet, and of safety. Yet let neither our reverence for a genius, nor our pity for a sufferer, dispose us to forget that, if his activity was virtue, his retreat was cowardice.

He then took upon himself the character of Physician, still, according to Sprat, with intention “to dissemble the main design of his coming over,” and, as Mr. Wood relates, “complying with the men then in power (which was much taken notice of by the royal party), he obtained an order to be created Doctor of Physick, which being done to his mind (whereby he gained the ill-will of some of his friends), he went into France again, having made a copy of verses on Oliver’s death.”

This is no favourable representation, yet even in this not much wrong can be discovered. How far he complied with the men in power, is to be enquired before he can be blamed. It is not said that he told them any secrets, or assisted them by intelligence, or  
any

any other act. If he only promised to be quiet, that they in whose hands he was might free him from confinement, he did what no law of society prohibits.

The man whose miscarriage in a just cause has put him in the power of his enemy may, without any violation of his integrity, regain his liberty, or preserve his life, by a promise of neutrality; for the stipulation gives the enemy nothing which he had not before; the neutrality of a captive may be always secured by his imprisonment or death. He that is at the disposal of another, may not promise to aid him in any injurious act, because no power can compel active obedience.

*Just  
remark* He may engage to do nothing, but not to do ill.

There is reason to think that Cowley promised little. It does not appear that his compliance gained him confidence enough to be trusted without security, for the bond of his bail was never cancelled; not that it made him think himself secure, for at that dissolution of government, which followed the death of Oliver, he returned into France, where

where he resumed his former station, and staid till the Restoration.

“ He continued,” says his biographer, “ under these bonds till the general deliverance ;” it is therefore to be supposed, that he did not go to France, and act again for the King, without the consent of his bondsman ; that he did not shew his loyalty at the hazard of his friend, but by his friend’s permission.

Of the verses on Oliver’s death, in which Wood’s narrative seems to imply something encomiastick, there has been no appearance. There is a discourse concerning his government, indeed, with verses intermixed, but such as certainly gained its author no friends among the abettors of usurpation.

A doctor of physick however he was made at Oxford, in December 1657 ; and in the commencement of the Royal Society, of which an account has been published by Dr. Birch, he appears busy among the experimental philosophers with the title of Doctor Cowley.

There is no reason for supposing that he ever attempted practice; but his preparatory studies have contributed something to the honour of his country. Considering Botany as necessary to a physician, he retired into Kent to gather plants; and as the predominance of a favourite study affects all subordinate operations of the intellect, Botany in the mind of Cowley turned into poetry. He composed in Latin several books on Plants, of which the first and second display the qualities of Herbs, in elegiac verse; the third and fourth the beauties of Flowers in various measures; and in the fifth and sixth, the uses of Trees in heroick numbers.

At the same time were produced from the same university, the two great Poets, Cowley and Milton, of dissimilar genius, of opposite principles; but concurring in the cultivation of Latin poetry, in which the English, till their works and May's poem appeared, seemed unable to contest the palm with any other of the lettered nations.

If

If the Latin performances of Cowley and Milton be compared, for May I hold to be superior to both, the advantage seems to lie on the side of Cowley. Milton is generally content to express the thoughts of the ancients in their language; Cowley, without much loss of purity or elegance, accommodates the diction of Rome to his own conceptions.

At the Restoration, after all the diligence of his long service, and with consciousness not only of the merit of fidelity, but of the dignity of great abilities, he naturally expected ample preferments; and, that he might not be forgotten by his own fault, wrote a Song of Triumph. But this was a time of such general hope, that great numbers were inevitably disappointed; and Cowley found his reward very tediously delayed. He had been promised by both Charles the first and second the Mastership of the Savoy; but "he lost it," says Wood, "by certain persons, enemies to the Muses."

The neglect of the court was not his only mortification ; having, by such alteration as he thought proper, fitted his old Comedy of the Guardian for the stage, he produced it to the publick under the title of the “ Cutter of Coleman-street.” It was treated on the stage with great severity, and was afterwards censured as a satire on the king’s party.

Mr. Dryden, who went with Mr. Sprat to the first exhibition, related to Mr. Dennis, “ that when they told Cowley how little favour had been shewn him, he received the news of his ill success, not with so much firmness as might have been expected from so great a man.”

What firmness they expected, or what weakness Cowley discovered, cannot be known. He that misses his end will never be as much pleased as he that attains it, even when he can impute no part of his failure to himself; and when the end is to please the multitude, no man perhaps has a right, in things admitting of gradation and comparison, to throw the whole blame upon his judges,

judges, and totally to exclude diffidence and shame by a haughty consciousness of his own excellence.

For the rejection of this play, it is difficult now to find the reason : it certainly has, in a very great degree, the power of fixing attention and exciting merriment. From the charge of disaffection he exculpates himself in his preface, by observing how unlikely it is that, having followed the royal family through all their distresses, " he should chuse " the time of their restoration to begin a " quarrel with them." It appears, however, from the Theatrical Register of Downes the prompter, to have been popularly considered as a satire on the royalists.

That he might shorten this tedious suspense, he published his pretensions and his discontent, in an ode called " The Complaint ;" in which he styles himself the *melancholy* Cowley. This met with the usual fortune of complaints, and seems to have excited more contempt than pity.

These unlucky incidents are brought, maliciously enough, together in some stanzas, written about that time, on the choice of a laureat ; a mode of satire, by which, since it was first introduced by Suckling, perhaps every generation of poets has been teased :

Savoy-missing Cowley came into the court,  
 Making apologies for his bad play ;  
 Every one gave him so good a report,  
 That Apollo gave heed to all he could say :  
 Nor would he have had, 'tis thought, a rebuke,  
 Unless he had done some notable folly ;  
 Writ verses unjustly in praise of Sam Tuke,  
 Or printed his pitiful Melancholy.

His vehement desire of retirement now came again upon him. "Not finding," says the morose Wood, "that preferment conferred upon him which he expected, while others for their money carried away most places, he retired discontented into Surrey."

"He was now," says the courtly Sprat, "weary of the vexations and formalities of  
 " an



“ an active condition. He had been perplexed  
 “ with a long compliance to foreign man-  
 “ ners. He was fatiated with the arts of a  
 “ court; which sort of life, though his vir-  
 “ tue made it innocent to him, yet nothing  
 “ could make it quiet. Those were the  
 “ reasons that moved him to follow the vio-  
 “ lent inclination of his own mind, which,  
 “ in the greatest throng of his former busi-  
 “ nefs, had still called upon him, and re-  
 “ presented to him the true delights of soli-  
 “ tary studies, of temperate pleasures, and a  
 “ moderate revenue below the malice and  
 “ flatteries of fortune.”

So differently are things seen, and so dif-  
 ferently are they shown; but actions are  
 visible, though motives are secret. Cowley  
 certainly retired; first to Barn-elms, and  
 afterwards to Chertsey, in Surrey. He seems,  
 however, to have lost part of his dread of  
 the *hum of men*. He thought himself now  
 safe enough from intrusion, without the de-  
 fence of mountains and oceans; and, instead  
 of seeking shelter in America, wisely went  
 only so far from the bustle of life as that he  
 might easily find his way back, when soli-  
 tude

*to what  
 degree  
 a wise  
 man should retire from  
 the world*

tude should grow tedious. His retreat was at first but slenderly accommodated; yet he soon obtained, by the interest of the Earl of St. Albans and the duke of Buckingham, such a lease of the Queen's lands as afforded him an ample income.

By the lover of virtue and of wit it will be solicitously asked, if he now was happy. Let them peruse one of his letters accidentally preserved by Peck, which I recommend to the consideration of all that may hereafter pant for solitude.

“ To Dr. THOMAS SPRAT.

“ Chertsey, 21 May, 1665.

“ The first night that I came hither I  
 “ caught so great a cold, with a defluxion of  
 “ rheum, as made me keep my chamber ten  
 “ days. And, two after, had such a bruise  
 “ on my ribs with a fall, that I am yet un-  
 “ able to move or turn myself in my bed.  
 “ This is my personal fortune here to begin  
 “ with. And, besides, I can get no money  
 “ from my tenants, and have my meadows  
 “ eaten

“ eaten up every night by cattle put in by  
 “ my neighbours. What this signifies, or  
 “ may come to in time, God knows ; if it  
 “ be ominous, it can end in nothing less  
 “ than hanging. Another misfortune has  
 “ been, and stranger than all the rest, that  
 “ you have broke your word with me, and  
 “ failed to come, even though you told Mr.  
 “ Bois that you would. This is what they  
 “ call *Monstri simile*. I do hope to recover  
 “ my late hurt, so farre within five or six  
 “ days (though it be uncertain yet whether  
 “ I shall ever recover it) as to walk about  
 “ again. And then, methinks, you and I  
 “ and *the Dean* might be very merry upon  
 “ S. Anne’s Hill. You might very conve-  
 “ niently come hither the way of Hampton  
 “ Town, lying there one night. I write this  
 “ in pain, and can say no more: *Verbum*  
 “ *sapienti.*”

He did not long enjoy the pleasure or  
 suffer the uneasiness of solitude ; for he  
 died at the Porch-house \* in Chertsey in 1667,  
 in the 49th year of his age.

\* Now in the possession of Mr. Clarke, Alderman of  
 London.

He

He was buried with great pomp near Chaucer and Spenser ; and king Charles pronounced, “ That Mr. Cowley had not left a “ better man behind him in England.” He is represented by Dr. Sprat as the most amiable of mankind ; and this posthumous praise may be safely credited, as it has never been contradicted by envy or by faction.

Such are the remarks and memorials which I have been able to add to the narrative of Dr. Sprat ; who, writing when the feuds of the civil war were yet recent, and the minds of either party easily irritated, was obliged to pass over many transactions in general expressions, and to leave curiosity often unsatisfied. What he did not tell, cannot however now be known. I must therefore recommend the perusal of his work, to which my narration can be considered only as a slender supplement.

COWLEY, like other poets who have written with narrow views, and, instead of tracing intellectual pleasure to its natural sources in the mind of man, paid their court to temporary prejudices, has been at one time too much praised, and too much neglected at another.

Wit, like all other things subject by their nature to the choice of man, has its changes and fashions, and at different times takes different forms. About the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets; of whom, in a criticism on the works of Cowley, the last of the race, it is not improper to give some account.

The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to shew their learning was their whole endeavour; but, unluckily resolving to shew it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry, they only wrote verses, and very often such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear; for the modulation

was

was so imperfect, that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables.

If the father of criticism has rightly denominated poetry τέχνη μιμητική, *an imitative art*, these writers will, without great wrong, lose their right to the name of poets; for they cannot be said to have imitated any thing; they neither copied nature nor life; neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operations of intellect.

Those however who deny them to be poets, allow them to be wits. Dryden confesses of himself and his contemporaries, that they fall below Donne in wit, but maintains that they surpass him in poetry.

If Wit be well described by Pope, as being, “that which has been often thought, “but was never before so well expressed,” they certainly never attained, nor ever sought it; for they endeavoured to be singular in their thoughts, and were careless of their diction. But Pope’s account of wit is undoubtedly erroneous: he depresses it below  
its

its natural dignity, and reduces it from strength of thought to happiness of language.

If by a more noble and more adequate conception that be considered as Wit, which is at once natural and new, that which, though, not obvious, is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; if it be that, which he that never found it, wonders how he missed; to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen. Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found.

But Wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations,

illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtilty surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.

From this account of their compositions it will be readily inferred, that they were not successful in representing or moving the affections. As they were wholly employed on something unexpected and surprising, they had no regard to that uniformity of sentiment which enables us to conceive and to excite the pains and the pleasure of other minds: they never enquired what, on any occasion, they should have said or done; but wrote rather as beholders than partakers of human nature; as Beings looking upon good and evil, impassive and at leisure; as Epicurean deities making remarks on the actions of men, and the vicissitudes of life, without interest and without emotion. Their courtship was void of fondness, and their lamentation of sorrow. Their wish was only to say what they hoped had been never said before.

Nor



Nor was the sublime more within their reach than the pathetick ; for they never attempted that comprehension and expanse of thought which at once fills the whole mind, and of which the first effect is sudden astonishment, and the second rational admiration. Sublimity is produced by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion. Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness. It is with great propriety that Subtlety, which in its original import means exility of particles, is taken in its metaphorical meaning for nicety of distinction. Those writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of greatness ; for great things cannot have escaped former observation. Their attempts were always analytick ; they broke every image into fragments ; and could no more represent, by their slender conceits and laboured particularities, the prospects of nature, or the scenes of life, than he, who dissected a sun-beam with a prism, can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon.

What they wanted however of the sublime, they endeavoured to supply by hyperbole; their amplification had no limits; they left not only reason but fancy behind them; and produced combinations of confused magnificence, that not only could not be credited, but could not be imagined.

Yet great labour, directed by great abilities, is never wholly lost: if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truth: if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage. To write on their plan, it was at least necessary to read and think. No man could be born a metaphysical poet, nor assume the dignity of a writer, by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery, and hereditary similes, by readiness of rhyme, and volubility of syllables.

In perusing the works of this race of authors, the mind is exercised either by recollection or inquiry; either something already  
learned

learned is to be retrieved, or something new is to be examined. If their greatness seldom elevates, their acuteness often surprises; if the imagination is not always gratified, at least the powers of reflection and comparison are employed; and in the mass of materials which ingenious absurdity has thrown together, genuine wit and useful knowledge may be sometimes found, buried perhaps in grossness of expression, but useful to those who know their value; and such as, when they are expanded to perspicuity, and polished to elegance, may give lustre to works which have more propriety, though less copiousness of sentiment.

This kind of writing, which was, I believe, borrowed from Marino and his followers, had been recommended by the example of Donne, a man of very extensive and various knowledge; and by Jonson, whose manner resembled that of Donne more in the ruggedness of his lines than in the cast of his sentiments.

When their reputation was high, they had undoubtedly more imitators, than time has

left behind. Their immediate successors, of whom any remembrance can be said to remain, were Suckling, Waller, Denham, Cowley, Cleiveland, and Milton. Denham and Waller sought another way to fame, by improving the harmony of our numbers. Milton tried the metaphysick stile only in his lines upon Hobson the Carrier. Cowley adopted it, and excelled his predecessors, having as much sentiment, and more musick. Suckling neither improved versification, nor abounded in conceits. The fashionable style remained chiefly with Cowley; Suckling could not reach it, and Milton disdained it.

CRITICAL REMARKS are not easily understood without examples; and I have therefore collected instances of the modes of writing by which this species of poets, for poets they were called by themselves and their admirers, was eminently distinguished.

AS the authors of this race were perhaps more desirous of being admired than understood, they sometimes drew their conceits from recesses of learning not very much fre-

frequented by common readers of poetry.  
Thus Cowley on *Knowledge* :

The sacred tree midst the fair orchard grew ;  
The phoenix Truth did on it rest,  
And built his perfum'd nest,  
That right Porphyrian tree which did true lo-  
gick shew.  
Each leaf did learned notions give,  
And th' apples were demonstrative :  
So clear their colour and divine,  
The very shade they cast did other lights out-  
shine.

On Anacreon continuing a lover in his old  
age :

Love was with thy life entwin'd,  
Close as heat with fire is join'd,  
A powerful brand prescrib'd the date  
Of thine, like Meleager's fate.  
Th' antiperistasis of age  
More inflam'd thy amorous rage.

In the following verses we have an allusion  
to a Rabbinical opinion concerning Manna :

Variety I ask not : give me one  
To live perpetually upon.  
The person Love does to us fit,  
Like manna, has the taste of all in it.

Thus *Donne* shews his medicinal knowledge in some encomiastick verses :

In every thing there naturally grows  
 A Balsamum to keep it fresh and new,  
 If 'twere not injur'd by extrinsique blows;  
 Your youth and beauty are this balm in you.  
 But you, of learning and religion,  
 And virtue and such ingredients, have made  
 A mithridate, whose operation  
 Keeps off, or cures what can be done or said.

Though the following lines of *Donne*, on the last night of the year, have something in them too scholastick, they are not inelegant :

This twilight of two years, not past nor next,  
 Some emblem is of me, or I of this,  
 Who, meteor-like, of stuff and form perplex,  
 Whose what and where, in disputation is,  
 If I should call me any thing, should miss.

I sum the years and me, and find me not  
 Debtor to th' old, nor creditor to th' new,  
 That cannot say, my thanks I have forgot,  
 Nor trust I this with hopes; and yet scarce true  
 This bravery is, since these times shew'd me  
 you.

DONNE.

Yet

Yet more abstruse and profound is *Donne's* reflection upon Man as a Microcosm :

If men be worlds, there is in every one  
Something to answer in some proportion  
All the world's riches : and in good men, this  
Virtue, our form's form, and our soul's soul is.

OF thoughts so far-fetched, as to be not only unexpected, but unnatural, all their books are full.

To a Lady, who wrote poesies for rings.  
They, who above do various circles find,  
Say, like a ring th' æquator heaven does bind.  
When heaven shall be adorn'd by thee,  
(Which then more heaven than 'tis, will be)  
'Tis thou must write the poetry there,  
For it wanteth one as yet,  
Though the sun pass through't twice a year,  
The sun, which is esteem'd the god of wit.

COWLEY.

The difficulties which have been raised about identity in philosophy, are by Cowley with still more perplexity applied to Love :

Five years ago (says story) I lov'd you,  
For which you call me most inconstant now ;  
Pardon me, madam, you mistake the man ;  
For I am not the same that I was then ;

No flesh is now the same 'twas then in me,  
And that my mind is chang'd yourself may see.

The same thoughts to retain still, and intents,  
Were more inconstant far; for accidents  
Must of all things most strangely inconstant  
prove,

If from one subject they t' another move:  
My members then, the father members were  
From whence these take their birth, which now  
are here.

If then this body love what th' other did,  
'Twere incest, which by nature is forbid.

The love of different women is, in geographical poetry, compared to travel through different countries;

Hast thou not found, each woman's breast  
(The land where thou hast travelled)  
Either by savages possess'd,  
Or wild, and uninhabited?  
What joy could'st take, or what repose,  
In countries so uncivilis'd as those?  
Lust, the scorching dog-star, here  
Rages with immoderate heat;  
Whilst Pride, the rugged Northern Bear,  
In others makes the cold too great,

And



And where these are temperate known,  
The soil's all barren sand, or rocky stone.

COWLEY.

A lover, burnt up by his affection, is compared to Egypt:

The fate of Egypt I sustain,  
And never feel the dew of rain,  
From clouds which in the head appear;  
But all my too much moisture owe  
To overflowings of the heart below.

COWLEY.

The lover supposes his lady acquainted with the ancient laws of augury and rites of sacrifice:

And yet this death of mine, I fear,  
Will ominous to her appear:  
When found in every other part,  
Her sacrifice is found without an heart.  
For the last tempest of my death  
Shall sigh out that too, with my breath.

That the chaos was harmonised, has been recited of old; but whence the different sounds arose, remained for a modern to discover:

Th' ungovern'd parts no correspondence knew,  
An artless war from thwarting motions grew;

D 4

Till

Till they to number and fixt rules were brought.  
 Water and air he for the Tenor chose,  
 Earth made the Base, the Treble flame arose.

COWLEY.

The tears of lovers are always of great poetical account; but Donne has extended them into worlds. If the lines are not easily understood, they may be read again.

On a round ball

A workman, that hath copies by, can lay  
 An Europe, Afric, and an Asia,  
 And quickly make that, which was nothing, all.  
     So doth each tear,  
     Which thee doth wear,  
 A globe, yea world, by that impression grow,  
 Till thy tears mixt with mine do overflow  
 This world, by waters sent from thee my heaven  
     dissolved so.

On reading the following lines, the reader may perhaps cry out—*Confusion worse confounded.*

Here lies a she sun, and a he moon here,  
     She gives the best light to his sphere,  
     Or each is both, and all, and so  
 They unto one another nothing owe.

DONNE.

Who

Who but Donne would have thought that  
a good man is a telescope?

Though God be our true glass, through which  
we see

All, since the being of all things is he,  
Yet are the trunks, which do to us derive  
Things, in proportion fit, by perspective  
Deeds of good men; for by their living here,  
Virtues, indeed remote, seem to be near.

Who would imagine it possible that in a  
very few lines so many remote ideas could be  
brought together :

Since 'tis my doom, Love's underfhrieve,

Why this reprieve?

Why doth my She Advowson fly

Incumbency?

To sell thyself dost thou intend

By candle's end,

And hold the contrast thus in doubt,

Life's taper out?

Think but how soon the market fails,

Your sex lives faster than the males;

As if to measure age's span,

The sober Julian were th'account of man,

Whilst you live by the fleet Gregorian.

CLEVELAND.

OF

**O**F enormous and disgusting hyberboles,  
these may be examples :

By every wind, that comes this way,  
Send me at least a figh or two,  
Such and so many I'll repay  
As shall themselves make winds to get to you.  
COWLEY.

In tears I'll waste these eyes,  
By Love so vainly fed ;  
So lust of old the Deluge punished.  
COWLEY.

All arm'd in brass, the richest dress of war,  
(A dismal glorious fight) he shone afar.  
The sun himself started with sudden fright,  
To see his beams return so dismal bright.  
COWLEY.

An universal consternation :

His bloody eyes he hurls round, his sharp paws  
Tear up the ground ; then runs he wild about,  
Lashing his angry tail and roaring out.  
Beasts creep into their dens, and tremble there ;  
Trees, though no wind is stirring, shake with  
fear ;  
Silence and horror fill the place around ;  
Echo itself dares scarce repeat the sound.

COWLEY.  
THEIR

**T**HEIR fictions were often violent and unnatural.

Of his Mistress bathing :

The fish around her crouded, as they do  
To the false light that treacherous fishers shew,  
And all with as much ease might taken be,  
As she at first took me :  
For ne'er did light so clear  
Among the waves appear,  
Though every night the sun himself set there.

COWLEY.

The poetical effect of a Lover's name upon  
glafs :

My name engrav'd herein  
Doth contribute my firmness to this glass ;  
Which, ever since that charm, hath been  
As hard as that which grav'd it was.

DONNE.

**T**HEIR conceits were sometimes slight  
and trifling.

On an inconstant woman :

He enjoys thy calmy sunshine now,  
And no breath stirring hears,  
In the clear heaven of thy brow,  
No smallest cloud appears,

He sees thee gentle, fair and gay,  
And trusts the faithless April of thy May.

COWLEY.

Upon a paper written with the juice of  
lemon, and read by the fire :

Nothing yet in thee is seen,  
But when a genial heat warms thee within,  
A new-born wood of various lines there grows ;  
Here buds an L, and there a B,  
Here sprouts a V, and there a T,  
And all the flourishing letters stand in rows.

COWLEY.

AS they sought only for novelty, they did  
not much enquire whether their allu-  
sions were to things high or low, elegant or  
gross ; whether they compared the little to  
the great, or the great to the little.

Phyick and Chirurgery for a Lover.

Gently, ah gently, madam, touch  
The wound, which you yourself have made ;  
That pain must needs be very much,  
Which makes me of your hand afraid.  
Cordials of pity give me now,  
For I too weak for purgings grow.

COWLEY.

The

## The World and a Clock.

Mahol, th' inferior world's fantastic face,  
 Through all the turns of matter's maze did trace;  
 Great Nature's well-set clock in pieces took;  
 On all the springs and smallest wheels did look  
 Of life and motion; and with equal art  
 Made up again the whole of every part.

COWLEY.

A coal-pit has not often found its poet;  
 but that it may not want its due honour,  
 Cleiveland has paralleled it with the Sun:

The moderate value of our guiltless ore  
 Makes no man atheist, and no woman whore;  
 Yet why should hallow'd vestal's sacred shrine  
 Deserve more honour than a flaming mine?  
 These pregnant wombs of heat would fitter be  
 Than a few embers, for a deity.

Had he our pits, the Persian would admire  
 No sun, but warm's devotion at our fire:  
 He'd leave the trotting whipster, and prefer  
 Our profound Vulcan 'bove that waggoner.  
 For wants he heat, or light? or would have  
 store  
 Or both? 'tis here: and what can suns give  
 more?

Nay, what's the sun but, in a different name,  
 A coal-pit rampant, or a mine on flame!

Then let this truth reciprocally run,  
The sun's heaven's coalery, and coals our sun.

### Death, a Voyage :

No family

Ere rigg'd a soul for heaven's discovery,  
With whom more venturers might boldly dare  
Venture their stakes, with him in joy to share.

DONNE.

**T**HEIR thoughts and expressions were  
sometimes grossly absurd, and such as  
no figures or licence can reconcile to the  
understanding.

### A Lover neither dead nor alive :

Then down I laid my head,  
Down on cold earth ; and for a while was dead,  
And my freed soul to a strange somewhere fled :  
Ah, sottish soul, said I,  
When back to its cage again I saw it fly :  
Fool to resume her broken chain !  
And row her galley here again !  
Fool, to that body to return  
Where it condemn'd and destin'd is to burn !  
Once dead, how can it be,  
Death should a thing so pleasant seem to thee,  
That thou shouldst come to live it o'er again in  
me ?

COWLEY.

A Lover's



A Lover's heart, a hand grenado.

Wo to her stubborn heart, if once mine come  
Into the self-same room,  
'Twill tear and blow up all within,  
Like a grenado shot into a magazin.  
Then shall Love keep the ashes, and torn parts,  
Of both our broken hearts :  
Shall out of both one new one make ;  
From her's th' allay ; from mine, the metal  
take.

COWLEY.

The poetical Propagation of Light :

The Prince's favour is diffus'd o'er all,  
From which all fortunes, names, and natures  
fall ;  
Then from those wombs of stars, the Bride's  
bright eyes,  
At every glance a constellation flies,  
And sows the court with stars, and doth prevent  
In light and power, the all-ey'd firmament :  
First her eye kindles other ladies' eyes,  
Then from their beams their jewels lustres rise ;  
And from their jewels torches do take fire,  
And all is warmth, and light, and good desire.

DONNE.

THEY

THEY were in very little care to clothe their notions with elegance of dress, and therefore miss the notice and the praise which are often gained by those, who think less, but are more diligent to adorn their thoughts.

That a mistress beloved is fairer in idea than in reality, is by Cowley thus expressed :

Thou in my fancy dost much higher stand,  
Than women can be plac'd by Nature's hand ;  
And I must needs, I'm sure, a loser be,  
To change thee, as thou'rt there, for very thee.

That prayer and labour should co-operate, are thus taught by Donne :

In none but us, are such mixt engines found,  
As hands of double office : for the ground  
We till with them ; and them to heaven we  
raise ;  
Who prayerless labours, or without this, prays,  
Doth but one half, that's none.

By the same author, a common topick, the danger of procrastination, is thus illustrated :

—That which I should have begun  
In my youth's morning, now late must be done ;  
And I, as giddy travellers must do,                      Which

Which stray or sleep all day, and having lost  
Light and strength, dark and tir'd must then  
ride post.

All that Man has to do is to live and die ;  
the sum of humanity is comprehended by  
Donne in the following lines :

Think in how poor a prison thou didst lie ;  
After, enabled but to suck and cry.  
Think, when 'twas grown to most, 'twas a poor  
inn,  
A province pack'd up in two yards of skin,  
And that usurp'd, or threaten'd with a rage  
Of sicknesses, or their true mother, age.  
But think that death hath now enfranchis'd thee ;  
Thou hast thy expansion now, and liberty ;  
Think, that a rusty piece discharg'd is flown  
In pieces, and the bullet is his own,  
And freely flies : this to thy soul allow,  
Think thy shell broke, think thy soul hatch'd  
but now.

**T**HEY were sometimes indelicate and disgusting. Cowley thus apostrophises beauty :

—Thou tyrant, which leav'st no man free !  
 Thou subtle thief, from whom nought safe can  
     be !  
 Thou murtherer, which hast kill'd, and devil,  
     which would'st damn me.

Thus he addresses his Mistress :

Thou who, in many a propriety,  
 So truly art the fun to me,  
 Add one more likeness, which I'm sure you can,  
 And let me and my fun beget a man.

Thus he represents the meditations of a  
 Lover :

Though in thy thoughts scarce any tracts have  
     been  
     So much as of original sin,  
 Such charms thy beauty wears as might  
 Desires in dying confess saints excite.  
     Thou with strange adultery  
 Dost in each breast a brothel keep ;  
     Awake, all men do lust for thee,  
 And some enjoy thee when they sleep.

The

## The true taste of Tears :

Hither with crystal vials, lovers, come,  
 And take my tears, which are Love's wine,  
 And try your mistress' tears at home ;  
 For all are false, that taste not just like mine.  
 DONNE.

This is yet more indelicate :

As the sweet sweat of roses in a still;  
 As that which from chaf'd musk-cat's pores  
 doth trill,  
 As the almighty balm of th' early East,  
 Such are the sweet drops of my mistress' breast:  
 And on her neck her skin such lustre sets;  
 They seem no sweat drops, but pearl coronets :  
 Rank sweaty froth thy mistress' brow defiles.  
 DONNE.

THEIR expressions sometimes raise horror, when they intend perhaps to be pathetic :

As men in hell are from diseases free,  
 So from all other ills am I,  
 Free from their known formality :  
 But all pains eminently lie in thee.

COWLEY.

**T**HEY were not always strictly curious, whether the opinions from which they drew their illustrations were true; it was enough that they were popular. Bacon remarks, that some falsehoods are continued by tradition, because they supply commodious allusions.

It gave a piteous groan, and so it broke;  
In vain it something would have spoke:  
The love within too strong for't was,  
Like poison put into a Venice-glass.

COWLEY.

**I**N forming descriptions, they looked out not for images, but for conceits. Night has been a common subject, which poets have contended to adorn. Dryden's Night is well known; Donne's is as follows:

Thou seest me here at midnight, now all rest:  
Time's dead low-water; when all minds divest  
To-morrow's business, when the labourers have  
Such rest in bed, that their last church-yard  
grave,  
Subject to change, will scarce be a type of this,  
Now when the client, whose last hearing is  
To-morrow, sleeps; when the condemned man,  
Who when he opes his eyes, must shut them then  
Again

Again by death, although sad watch he keep,  
 Doth practise dying by a little sleep,  
 Thou at this midnight see'st me.

**I**T must be however confessed of these writers, that if they are upon common subjects often unnecessarily and unpoetically subtle; yet where scholastick speculation can be properly admitted, their copiousness and acuteness may justly be admired. What Cowley has written upon Hope, shews an unequalled fertility of invention :

Hope, whose weak being ruin'd is,  
 Alike if it succeed, and if it miss;  
 Whom good or ill does equally confound,  
 And both the horns of Fate's dilemma wound.  
 Vain shadow, which dost vanish quite,  
 Both at full noon and perfect night !  
 The stars have not a possibility  
 Of blessing thee ;  
 If things then from their end we happy call,  
 'Tis Hope is the most hopeless thing of all.  
 Hope, thou bold taster of delight,  
 Who, whilst thou should'st but taste, devour'st  
 it quite !  
 Thou bring'st us an estate, yet leav'st us poor,  
 By clogging it with legacies before !

The joys which we entire should wed,  
Come deflower'd virgins to our bed ;  
Good fortunes without gain imported be,  
Such mighty custom's paid to thee :  
For joy, like wine, kept close does better taste ;  
If it take air before, its spirits waste.

To the following comparison of a man that travels, and his wife that stays at home, with a pair of compasses, it may be doubted whether absurdity or ingenuity has the better claim :

Our two souls therefore, which are one,  
Though I must go, endure not yet  
A breach, but an expansion,  
Like gold to airy thinness beat,  
If they be two, they are two so  
As stiff twin-compasses are two,  
Thy soul the fixt foot, makes no show  
To move, but doth, if th' other do.  
And though it in the centre sit,  
Yet when the other far doth roam,  
It leans, and hearkens after it,  
And grows erect, as that comes home,  
Such wilt thou be to me, who must  
Like th' other foot, obliquely run.

Thy



Thy firmness makes my circle just,  
And makes me end, where I begun.

DONNE.

In all these examples it is apparent, that whatever is improper or vitious, is produced by a voluntary deviation from nature in pursuit of something new and strange; and that the writers fail to give delight, by their desire of exciting admiration.

**H**AVING thus endeavoured to exhibit a general representation of the style and sentiments of the metaphysical poets, it is now proper to examine particularly the works of Cowley, who was almost the last of that race, and undoubtedly the best.

His Miscellanies contain a collection of short compositions, written some as they were dictated by a mind at leisure, and some as they were called forth by different occasions; with great variety of style and sentiment, from burlesque levity to awful grandeur. Such an assemblage of diversified excellence no other poet has hitherto afforded. To choose the best, among many good, is one of the most

hazardous attempts of criticism. I know not whether Scaliger himself has persuaded many readers to join with him in his preference of the two favourite odes, which he estimates in his raptures at the value of a kingdom. I will however venture to recommend Cowley's first piece, which ought to be inscribed *To my muse*, for want of which the second couplet is without reference. When the title is added, there will still remain a defect; for every piece ought to contain in itself whatever is necessary to make it intelligible. Pope has some epitaphs without names; which are therefore epitaphs to be let, occupied indeed for the present, but hardly appropriated.

The ode on Wit is almost without a rival, It was about the time of Cowley that *Wit*, which had been till then used for *Intellection*, in contradistinction to *Will*, took the meaning, whatever it be, which it now bears,

Of all the passages in which poets have exemplified their own precepts, none will easily be found of greater excellence than that in which Cowley condemns exuberance of Wit;

Yet

Yet 'tis not to adorn and gild each part,  
That shews more cost than art.  
Jewels at nose and lips but ill appear ;  
Rather than all things wit, let none be there.  
Several lights will not be seen,  
If there be nothing else between.  
Men doubt, because they stand so thick i'th' sky,  
If those be stars which paint the galaxy.

In his verses to lord Falkland, whom every man of his time was proud to praise, there are, as there must be in all Cowley's compositions, some striking thoughts ; but they are not well wrought. His elegy on Sir Henry Wotton is vigorous and happy, the series of thoughts is easy and natural, and the conclusion, though a little weakened by the intrusion of Alexander, is elegant and forcible.

It may be remarked, that in this Elegy, and in most of his encomiastick poems, he has forgotten or neglected to name his heroes.

In his poem on the death of Hervey, there is much praise, but little passion, a very just and ample delineation of such virtues as a studious

dious privacy admits, and such intellectual excellence as a mind not yet called forth to action can display. He knew how to distinguish, and how to commend the qualities of his companion ; but when he wishes to make us weep, he forgets to weep himself, and diverts his sorrow by imagining how his crown of bays, if he had it, would *crackle* in the *fire*. It is the odd fate of this thought to be worse for being true. The bay-leaf crackles remarkably as it burns ; as therefore this property was not assigned it by chance, the mind must be thought sufficiently at ease that could attend to such minuteness of physiology. But the power of Cowley is not to move the affections, but to exercise the understanding.

The *Chronicle* is a composition unrivalled and alone : such gaiety of fancy, such facility of expression, such varied similitude, such a succession of images, and such a dance of words, it is vain to expect except from Cowley. His strength always appears in his agility ; his volatility is not the flutter of a light, but the bound of an elastick mind. His levity never leaves his learning behind it ;

it; the moralist, the politician, and the critick, mingle their influence even in this airy frolick of genius. To such a performance Suckling could have brought the gaiety, but not the knowledge; Dryden could have supplied the knowledge, but not the gaiety.

The verses to Davenant, which are vigorously begun, and happily concluded, contain some hints of criticism very justly conceived and happily expressed. Cowley's critical abilities have not been sufficiently observed: the few decisions and remarks which his prefaces and his notes on the Davides supply, were at that time accessions to English literature, and shew such skill as raises our wish for more examples.

The lines from Jersey are a very curious and pleasing specimen of the familiar descending to the burlesque.

His two metrical disquisitions *for* and *against* Reason, are no mean specimens of metaphysical poetry. The stanzas against knowledge produce little conviction. In those which are intended to exalt the human faculties,

culties, Reason has its proper task assigned it; that of judging, not of things revealed, but of the reality of revelation. In the verses *for* Reason is a passage which Bentley, in the only English verses which he is known to have written, seems to have copied, though with the inferiority of an imitator.

The holy Book like the eighth sphere does shine  
 With thousand lights of truth divine,  
 So numberless the stars that to our eye  
 It makes all but one galaxy :  
 Yet Reason must assist too ; for in seas  
 So vast and dangerous as these,  
 Our course by stars above we cannot know  
 Without the compass too below.

After this says Bentley :

Who travels in religious jars,  
 Truth mix'd with error, clouds with rays,  
 With Whiston wanting pyx and stars,  
 In the wide ocean sinks or strays.

Cowley seems to have had, what Milton is believed to have wanted, the skill to hate his own performances by their just value, and has therefore closed his *Miscellanies* with the verses upon *Crafhaw*, which apparently excel  
 all

all that have gone before them, and in which there are beauties which common authors may justly think not only above their attainment, but above their ambition.

To the Miscellanies succeed the *Anacreontiques*, or paraphrastical translations of some little poems, which pass, however justly, under the name of Anacreon. Of those songs dedicated to festivity and gaiety, in which even the morality is voluptuous, and which teach nothing but the enjoyment of the present day, he has given rather a pleasing than a faithful representation, having retained their spriteliness, but lost their simplicity. The Anacreon of Cowley, like the Homer of Pope, has admitted the decoration of some modern graces, by which he is undoubtedly made more amiable to common readers, and perhaps, if they would honestly declare their own perceptions, to far the greater part of those whom courtesy and ignorance are content to style the Learned.

These little pieces will be found more finished in their kind than any other of Cowley's works. The diction shews nothing of the mould of time, and the sentiments are at no great distance

tance from our present habitudes of thought. Real mirth must be always natural, and nature is uniform. Men have been wise in very different modes; but they have always laughed the same way,

Levity of thought naturally produced familiarity of language, and the familiar part of language continues long the same: the dialogue of comedy, when it is transcribed from popular manners and real life, is read from age to age with equal pleasure. The artifices of inversion, by which the established order of words is changed, or of innovation, by which new words or new meanings of words are introduced, is practised, not by those who talk to be understood, but by those who write to be admired.

The Anacreontiques therefore of Cowley give now all the pleasure which they ever gave. If he was formed by nature for one kind of writing more than for another, his power seems to have been greatest in the familiar and the festive.

The



The next class of his poems is called *The Mistress*, of which it is not necessary to select any particular pieces for praise or censure. They have all the same beauties and faults, and nearly in the same proportion. They are written with exuberance of wit, and with copiousness of learning; and it is truly asserted by Sprat, that the plenitude of the writer's knowledge flows in upon his page, so that the reader is commonly surpris'd into some improvement. But, considered as the verses of a lover, no man that has ever loved will much commend them. They are neither courtly nor pathetick, have neither gallantry nor fondness. His praises are too far-fought, and too hyperbolical, either to express love, or to excite it: every stanza is crowded with darts and flames, with wounds and death, with mingled souls, and with broken hearts.

The principal artifice by which *The Mistress* is filled with conceits is very copiously displayed by Addison. Love is by Cowley, as by other poets, expressed metaphorically by flame and fire; and that which is true of  
real

real fire is said of love, or figurative fire, the same word in the same sentence retaining both significations. Thus, "observing the  
" cold regard of his mistress's eyes, and at  
" the same time their power of producing  
" love in him, he considers them as burning-  
" glasses made of ice. Finding himself able  
" to live in the greatest extremities of love,  
" he concludes the torrid zone to be habi-  
" table. Upon the dying of a tree, on which  
" he had cut his loves, he observes, that his  
" flames had burnt up and withered the  
" tree."

These conceits Addison calls mixed wit ; that is, wit which consists of thoughts true in one sense of the expression, and false in the other. Addison's representation is sufficiently indulgent. That confusion of images may entertain for a moment ; but being unnatural, it soon grows wearisome. Cowley delighted in it, as much as if he had invented it ; but, not to mention the ancients, he might have found it full-blown in modern Italy. Thus Sannazaro :

Aspice

Aspice quam variis distringar Lesbica curis,  
 Uror, & heu ! nostro manat ab igne liquor ;  
 Sum Nilus, sumque Ætna simul ; restringite  
 flammæ  
 O lacrimæ, aut lacrimas ebibe flamma meas.

One of the severe theologians of that time censured him as having published *a book of profane and lascivious Verses*. From the charge of profaneness, the constant tenour of his life, which seems to have been eminently virtuous, and the general tendency of his opinions, which discover no irreverence of religion, must defend him ; but that the accusation of lasciviousness is unjust, the perusal of his works will sufficiently evince.

Cowley's *Mistress* has no power of seduction : “ she plays round the head, but comes not at the heart.” Her beauty and absence, her kindness and cruelty, her disdain and inconstancy, produce no correspondence of emotion. His poetical account of the virtues of plants, and colours of flowers, is not perused with more sluggish frigidity. The compositions are such as might have been written for penance by a hermit, or for hire by a philosophi-

cal rhymers who had only heard of another sex; for they turn the mind only on the writer, whom, without thinking on a woman but as the subject for a task, we sometimes esteem as learned, and sometimes despise as trifling, always admire as ingenious, and always condemn as unnatural.

The Pindarique Odes are now to be considered; a species of composition, which Cowley thinks Pancirolus might have counted *in his list of the lost inventions of antiquity*, and which he has made a bold and vigorous attempt to recover.

The purpose with which he has paraphrased an Olympick and Nemeæan Ode, is by himself sufficiently explained. His endeavour was, not to shew *precisely what Pindar spoke, but his manner of speaking*. He was therefore not at all restrained to his expressions, nor much to his sentiments; nothing was required of him, but not to write as Pindar would not have written.

Of the Olympick Ode the beginning is, I think, above the original in elegance, and the conclusion below it in strength. The  
con-

connection is supplied with great perspicuity, and the thoughts, which to a reader of less skill seem thrown together by chance, are concatenated without any abruption. Though the English ode cannot be called a translation, it may be very properly consulted as a commentary.

The spirit of Pindar is indeed not every where equally preserved. The following pretty lines are not such as his *deep mouth* was used to pour :

Great Rhea's son,  
If in Olympus' top where thou  
Sitt'st to behold thy sacred show,  
If in Alpheus' silver flight,  
If in my verse thou take delight,  
My verse, great Rhea's son, which is  
Lofty as that, and smooth as this.

In the Nemæan ode the reader must, in mere justice to Pindar, observe that whatever is said of *the original new moon, her tender forehead and her horns*, is superadded by his paraphrast, who has many other plays of words and fancy unsuitable to the original,  
as,

The table, free for every guest,  
No doubt will thee admit,  
And feast more upon thee, than thou on it.

He sometimes extends his author's thoughts without improving them. In the Olympionick an oath is mentioned in a single word, and Cowley spends three lines in swearing by the *Castalian Stream*. We are told of Theron's bounty, with a hint that he had enemies, which Cowley thus enlarges in rhyming prose :

But in this thankless world the giver  
Is envied even by the receiver ;  
'Tis now the cheap and frugal fashion  
Rather to hide than own the obligation :  
Nay, 'tis much worse than so ;  
It now an artifice does grow  
Wrongs and injuries to do,  
Left men should think we owe.

It is hard to conceive that a man of the first rank in learning and wit, when he was dealing out such minute morality in such feeble diction, could imagine, either waking or dreaming, that he imitated Pindar.

In

In the following odes, where Cowley chooses his own subjects, he sometimes rises to dignity truly Pindarick; and, if some deficiencies of language be forgiven, his strains are such as those of the Theban bard were to his contemporaries:

Begin the song, and strike the living lyre:  
 Lo how the years to come, a numerous and  
     well-fitted quire,  
 All hand in hand do decently advance,  
 And to my song with smooth and equal measure  
     dance;  
 While the dance lasts, how long soe'er it be,  
 My musick's voice shall bear it company;  
 Till all gentle notes be drown'd  
 In the last trumpet's dreadful sound.

After such enthusiasm, who will not lament to find the poet conclude with lines like these!

But stop, my Muse—  
 Hold thy Pindarick Pegasus closely in,  
 Which does to rage begin—  
 —'Tis an unruly and a hard-mouth'd horse—  
 'Twill no unskilful touch endure,  
 But flings writer and reader too that fits not sure.

The fault of Cowley, and perhaps of all the writers of the metaphysical race, is that of pursuing his thoughts to their last ramifications, by which he loses the grandeur of generality; for of the greatest things the parts are little; what is little can be but pretty, and by claiming dignity becomes ridiculous. Thus all the power of description is destroyed by a scrupulous enumeration; and the force of metaphors is lost, when the mind by the mention of particulars is turned more upon the original than the secondary sense, more upon that from which the illustration is drawn than that to which it is applied.

Of this we have a very eminent example in the ode intituled *The Muse*, who goes to *take the air* in an intellectual chariot, to which he harnesses Fancy and Judgement, Wit and Eloquence, Memory and Invention: how he distinguished Wit from Fancy, or how Memory could properly contribute to Motion, he has not explained; we are however content to suppose that he could have justified his own fiction, and wish to see the



Muse begin her career ; but there is yet more  
to be done.

Let the postilion Nature mount, and let  
The coachman Art be set ;  
And let the airy footmen, running all beside,  
Make a long row of goodly pride ;  
Figures, conceits, raptures, and sentences,  
In a well-worded drefs,  
And innocent loves, and pleasant truths, and  
useful lies,  
In all their gaudy liveries.

Every mind is now disgusted with this  
cumber of magnificence ; yet I cannot refuse  
myself the four next lines :

Mount, glorious queen, thy travelling throne,  
And bid it to put on ;  
For long though cheerful is the way,  
And life alas allows but one ill winter's day.

In the same ode, celebrating the power of  
the Muse, he gives her prescience, or, in  
poetical language, the foresight of events  
hatching in futurity ; but having once an  
egg in his mind, he cannot forbear to shew  
us that he knows what an egg contains :

Thou into the close nests of time dost peep,  
 And there with piercing eye  
 Through the firm shell and the thick white  
 dost spy  
 Years to come a-forming lie,  
 Close in their sacred fecundine asleep.

The same thought is more generally, and therefore more poetically, expressed by Casimir, a writer who has many of the beauties and faults of Cowley :

Omnibus mundi Dominator horis  
 Aptat urgendas per inane pennas,  
 Pars adhuc nido latet, & futuros  
 Crescit in annos.

Cowley, whatever was his subject, seems to have been carried, by a kind of destiny, to the light and the familiar, or to conceits which require still more ignoble epithets. A slaughter in the Red Sea, *new dies the waters name*; and England, during the Civil War, was *Albion no more, nor to be named from white*. It is surely by some fascination not easily surmounted, that a writer professing to revive *the noblest and highest writing in verse*, makes this address to the new year :

Nay,

Nay, if thou lov'st me, gentle year,  
 Let not so much as love be there,  
 Vain fruitless love I mean; for, gentle year,  
     Although I fear,  
 There's of this caution little need,  
     Yet, gentle year, take heed  
     How thou dost make  
     Such a mistake;  
 Such love I mean alone  
 As by thy cruel predecessors has been shewn;  
 For, though I have too much cause to doubt it,  
 I fain would try, for once, if life can live with-  
     out it.

The reader of this will be inclined to cry  
 out with Prior—

—*Ye Criticks, say,*  
*How poor to this was Pindar's style!*

Even those who cannot perhaps find in the  
 Isthmian or Nemeæan songs what Antiquity  
 has disposed them to expect, will at least see  
 that they are ill represented by such puny  
 poetry; and all will determine that if this be  
 the old Theban strain, it is not worthy of  
 revival.

To

To the disproportion and incongruity of Cowley's sentiments must be added the uncertainty and looseness of his measures. He takes the liberty of using in any place a verse of any length, from two syllables to twelve. The verses of Pindar have, as he observes, very little harmony to a modern ear; yet by examining the syllables we perceive them to be regular, and have reason enough for supposing that the ancient audiences were delighted with the sound. The imitator ought therefore to have adopted what he found, and to have added what was wanting; to have preserved a constant return of the same numbers, and to have supplied smoothness of transition and continuity of thought.

It is urged by Dr. Sprat, that the *irregularity of numbers is the very thing* which makes *that kind of poesy fit for all manner of subjects*. But he should have remembered, that what is fit for every thing can fit nothing well. The great pleasure of verse arises from the known measure of the lines, and uniform structure of the stanzas, by which the voice is regulated, and the memory relieved.

If

but  
scarcely  
true

If the Pindarick style be, what Cowley thinks it, *the highest and noblest kind of writing in verse*, it can be adapted only to high and noble subjects; and it will not be easy to reconcile the poet with the critick, or to conceive how that can be the highest kind of writing in verse, which, according to Sprat, *is chiefly to be preferred for its near affinity to prose*.

This lax and lawless versification so much concealed the deficiencies of the barren, and flattered the laziness of the idle, that it immediately overspread our books of poetry; all the boys and girls caught the pleasing fashion, and they that could do nothing else could write like Pindar. The rights of antiquity were invaded, and disorder tried to break into the Latin: a poem on the Sheldonian Theatre, in which all kinds of verse are shaken together, is unhappily inserted in the *Musæ Anglicanæ*. Pindarism prevailed above half a century; but at last died gradually away, and other imitations supply its place.

The

The Pindarique Odes have so long enjoyed the highest degree of poetical reputation, that I am not willing to dismiss them with unabated censure; and surely though the mode of their composition be erroneous, yet many parts deserve at least that admiration which is due to great comprehension of knowledge, and great fertility of fancy. The thoughts are often new, and often striking; but the greatness of one part is disgraced by the littleness of another; and total negligence of language gives the noblest conceptions the appearance of a fabrick august in the plan, but mean in the materials. Yet surely those verses are not without a just claim to praise; of which it may be said with truth, that no man but Cowley could have written them.

The Davideis now remains to be considered; a poem which the author designed to have extended to twelve books, merely, as he makes no scruple of declaring, because the Eneid had that number; but he had leisure or perseverance only to write the third part. Epick poems have been left unfinished by Virgil, Statius, Spenser, and Cowley. That

we have not the whole *Davideis* is, however, not much to be regretted; for in this undertaking Cowley is, tacitly at least, confessed to have miscarried. There are not many examples of so great a work, produced by an author generally read, and generally praised, that has crept through a century with so little regard. Whatever is said of Cowley, is meant of his other works. Of the *Davideis* no mention is made; it never appears in books, nor emerges in conversation. By the *Spectator* it has once been quoted, and by *Rymer* it has once been praised; nor do I recollect much other notice from its publication till now, in the whole succession of English literature.

Of this obscurity and neglect, if the reason be inquired, it will be found partly in the choice of the subject, and partly in the performance of the work.

Sacred History has been always read with submissive reverence, and an imagination over-awed and controlled. We have been accustomed to acquiesce in the nakedness and simplicity of the authentick narrative, and to  
repose

repose on its veracity with such humble confidence, as suppresses curiosity. We go with the historian as he goes, and stop with him when he stops. All amplification is frivolous and vain ; all addition to that which is already sufficient for the purposes of religion, seems not only useless, but in some degree profane.

Such events as were produced by the visible interposition of Divine Power are above the power of human genius to dignify. The miracle of Creation, however it may teem with images, is best described with little diffusion of language : *He spake the word, and they were made.*

We are told that Saul *was troubled with an evil spirit* ; from this Cowley takes an opportunity of describing hell, and telling the history of Lucifer, who was, he says,

Once general of a gilded host of sprites,  
Like Hesper leading forth the spangled nights ;  
But down like lightning, which him struck, he  
came,  
And roar'd at his first plunge into the flame.

Lucifer



Lucifer makes a speech to the inferior agents of mischief, in which there is something of heathenism, and therefore of impropriety ; and, to give efficacy to his words, concludes by lashing *his breast with his long tail*. Envy, after a pause, steps out, and among other declarations of her zeal utters lines :

Do thou but threat, loud storms shall make  
    reply,  
And thunder echo to the trembling sky.  
Whilst raging seas swell to so bold an height,  
As shall the fire's proud element affright.  
Th' old drudging Sun, from his long-beaten  
    way,  
Shall at thy voice start, and misguide the day.  
The jocund orbs shall break their measur'd  
    pace,  
And stubborn Poles change their allotted place.  
Heaven's gilded troops shall flutter here and  
    there,  
Leaving their boasting songs tun'd to a sphere.

Every reader feels himself weary with this  
useless talk of an allegorical Being.

It

It is not only when the events are confessedly miraculous, that fancy and fiction lose their effect: the whole system of life, while the Theocracy was yet visible, has an appearance so different from all other scenes of human action, that the reader of the Sacred Volume habitually considers it as a peculiar mode of existence of a distinct species of mankind, that lived and acted with manners uncommunicable; so that it is difficult even for imagination to place us in the state of them whose story is related, and by consequence their joys and griefs are not easily adopted, nor can the attention be often interested in any thing that befalls them.

To the subject, thus originally indisposed to the reception of poetical embellishments, the writer brought little that could reconcile impatience, or attract curiosity. Nothing can be more disgusting than a narrative spangled with conceits, and conceits are all that the Davideis supplies.

One of the great sources of poetical delight is description, or the power of presenting

ing pictures to the mind. Cowley gives inferences instead of images, and shews not what may be supposed to have been seen, but what thoughts the sight might have suggested. When Virgil describes the stone which Turnus lifted against Æneas, he fixes the attention on its bulk and weight :

Saxum circumspicit ingens,  
Saxum antiquum, ingens, campo quod forte  
jacebat  
Limes agro positus, litem ut discerneret arvis.

Cowley says of the stone with which Cain slew his brother,

I saw him fling the stone, as if he meant  
At once his murder and his monument.

Of the sword taken from Goliath, he says,  
A sword so great, that it was only fit  
To cut off his great head that came with it.

Other poets describe death by some of its common appearances ; Cowley says, with a learned allusion to sepulchral lamps real or fabulous,

'Twixt his right ribs deep pierc'd the furious  
blade,

And open'd wide those secret vessels where  
Life's light goes out, when first they let in air.

But he has allusions vulgar as well as  
learned. In a visionary succession of kings :

Joas at first does bright and glorious show,  
In life's fresh morn his fame does early crow.

Describing an undisciplined army, after  
having said with elegance,

His forces seem'd no army, but a crowd  
Heartless, unarm'd, disorderly, and loud ;  
he gives them a fit of the ague.

The allusions however are not always so  
vulgar things :

The King was plac'd alone, and o'er his head  
A well-wrought heaven of silk and gold was  
spread.

Whatever he writes is always polluted with  
some conceit :

Where the sun's fruitful beams give metals birth,  
Where he the growth of fatal gold does see,  
Gold, which alone more influence has than he.

In

In one passage he starts a sudden question,  
to the confusion of philosophy :

Ye learned heads, whom ivy garlands grace,  
Why does that twining plant the oak embrace ?  
The oak, for courtship most of all unfit,  
And rough as are the winds that fight with it.

His expressions have sometimes a degree of  
meanness that surpasses expectation :

Nay, gentle guests, he cries, since now you're in,  
The story of your gallant friend begin.

In a simile descriptive of the Morning :

As glimmering stars just at th' approach of day,  
Cashier'd by troops, at last drop all away.

The dress of Gabriel deserves attention :

He took for skin a cloud most soft and bright,  
That ere the midday sun pierc'd through with  
light,

Upon his cheeks a lively blush he spread,  
Wash'd from the morning beauties deepest red ;  
An harmless flattering meteor shone for hair,  
And fell adown his shoulders with loose care ;  
He cuts out a silk mantle from the skies,  
Where the most spritely azure pleas'd the eyes ;

G 2

This

This he with starry vapours sprinkles all,  
Took in their prime ere they grow ripe and fall ;  
Of a new rainbow, ere it fret or fade,  
The choicest piece cut out, a scarf is made.

This is a just specimen of Cowley's imagery: what might in general expressions be great and forcible, he weakens and makes ridiculous by branching it into small parts. That Gabriel was invested with the softest or brightest colours of the sky, we might have been told, and dismissed to improve the idea in our different proportions of conception; but Cowley could not let us go till he had related where Gabriel got first his skin, and then his mantle, then his lace, and then his scarf, and related it in the terms of the mercer and the taylor.

Sometimes he indulges himself in a digression, always conceived with his natural exuberance, and commonly, even where it is not long, continued till it is tedious :

I' th' library a few choice authors stood,  
Yet 'twas well stor'd; for that small store was  
good;  
Writing, man's spiritual plyfic, was not then  
Itself, as now, grown a disease of men.

## Learning

Learning (young virgin) but few suitors knew;  
 The common prostitute she lately grew,  
 And with the spurious brood loads now the press;  
 Laborious effects of idleness!

As the *Davideis* affords only four books, though intended to consist of twelve, there is no opportunity for such criticisms as *Epick* poems commonly supply. The plan of the whole work is very imperfectly shewn by the third part. The duration of an unfinished action cannot be known. Of characters either not yet introduced, or shewn but upon few occasions, the full extent and the nice discriminations cannot be ascertained. The fable is plainly implex, formed rather from the *Odyssy* than the *Iliad*; and many artifices of diversification are employed, with the skill of a man acquainted with the best models. The past is recalled by narration, and the future anticipated by vision: but he has been so lavish of his poetical art, that it is difficult to imagine how he could fill eight books more without practising again the same modes of disposing his matter; and perhaps the perception of this growing incumbrance inclined him to stop. By this abruption, posterity

lost more instruction than delight. If the continuation of the Davideis can be missed, it is for the learning that had been diffused over it, and the notes in which it had been explained.

Had not his characters been depraved like every other part by improper decorations, they would have deserved uncommon praise. He gives Saul both the body and mind of a hero :

His way once chose, he forward thrust outright,  
Nor turn'd aside for danger or delight.

And the different beauties of the lofty Merali and the gentle Michol are very justly conceived and strongly painted.

Rymer has declared the Davideis superior to the *Jerusalem of Tasso*, “ which,” says he, “ the poet, with all his care, has not totally “ purged from pedantry.” If by pedantry is meant that minute knowledge which is derived from particular sciences and studies, in opposition to the general notions supplied by a wide survey of life and nature, Cowley certainly errs, by introducing pedantry far  
more



more frequently than Tasso. I know not, indeed, why they should be compared; for the resemblance of Cowley's work to Tasso's is only that they both exhibit the agency of celestial and infernal spirits, in which however they differ widely; for Cowley supposes them commonly to operate upon the mind by suggestion; Tasso represents them as promoting or obstructing events by external agency.

Of particular passages that can be properly compared, I remember only the description of Heaven, in which the different manner of the two writers is sufficiently discernible. Cowley's is scarcely description, unless it be possible to describe by negatives; for he tells us only what there is not in heaven; Tasso endeavours to represent the splendours and pleasures of the regions of happiness. Tasso affords images, and Cowley sentiments. It happens, however, that Tasso's description affords some reason for Rymer's censure. He says of the Supreme Being,

Hà sotto i piedi e fatto e la natura  
Ministri humili, e'l moto, e ch'il misura.

The second line has in it more of pedantry than perhaps can be found in any other stanza of the poem.

In the perusal of the *Davideis*, as of all Cowley's works, we find wit and learning unprofitably squandered. Attention has no relief; the affections are never moved; we are sometimes surpris'd, but never delighted, and find much to admire, but little to approve. Still however it is the work of Cowley, of a mind capacious by nature, and replenish'd by study.

In the general review of Cowley's poetry it will be found, that he wrote with abundant fertility, but negligent or unskilful selection; with much thought, but with little imagery; that he is never pathetick, and rarely sublime, but always either ingenious or learned, either acute or profound.

It is said by Denham in his elegy,

To him no author was unknown;  
Yet what he writ was all his own.

This

This wide position requires less limitation, when it is affirmed of Cowley, than perhaps of any other poet—He read much, and yet borrowed little.

His character of writing was indeed not his own: he unhappily adopted that which was predominant. He saw a certain way to present praise, and not sufficiently enquiring by what means the ancients have continued to delight through all the changes of human manners, he contented himself with a deciduous laurel, of which the verdure in its spring was bright and gay, but which time has been continually stealing from his brows.

He was in his own time considered as of unrivalled excellence. Clarendon represents him as having taken a flight beyond all that went before him; and Milton is said to have declared, that the three greatest English poets were Spenser, Shakspeare, and Cowley.

His manner he had in common with others; but his sentiments were his own. Upon every subject he thought for himself; and such was his copiousness of knowledge, that  
some-

something at once remote and applicable rushed into his mind; yet it is not likely that he always rejected a commodious idea merely because another had used it: his known wealth was so great, that he might have borrowed without loss of credit.

In his elegy on Sir Henry Wotton, the last lines have such resemblance to the noble epigram of Grotius upon the death of Scaliger, that I cannot but think them copied from it, though they are copied by no servile hand.

One passage in his *Mistress* is so apparently borrowed from Donne, that he probably would not have written it, had it not mingled with his own thoughts, so as that he did not perceive himself taking it from another.

Although I think thou never found wilt be,  
Yet I'm resolv'd to search for thee;  
The search itself rewards the pains.  
So, though the chymic his great secret miss,  
(For neither it in Art nor Nature is)  
Yet things well worth his toil he gains:  
And does his charge and labour pay  
With good unsought experiments by the way.

COWLEY.

Some

Some that have deeper, digg'd Love's mine  
than I,

Say, where his centric happiness doth lie :

I have lov'd, and got, and told ;

But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,

I should not find that hidden mystery ;

Oh, 'tis imposture all :

And as no chymic yet th' elixir got,

But glorifies his pregnant pot,

If by the way to him befall

Some odouriferous thing, or medicinal,

So lovers dream a rich and long delight,

But get a winter-seeming summer's night.

DONNE.

It is related by Clarendon, that Cowley always acknowledged his obligation to the learning and industry of Jonson ; but I have found no traces of Jonson in his works : to emulate Donne, appears to have been his purpose ; and from Donne he may have learned that familiarity with religious images, and that light allusion to sacred things, by which readers far short of sanctity are frequently offended ; and which would not be borne in the present age, when devotion, perhaps not more fervent, is more delicate.

Having

Having produced one passage taken by Cowley from Donne, I will recompense him by another which Milton seems to have borrowed from him. He says of Goliath,

His spear, the trunk was of a lofty tree,  
Which Nature meant some tall ship's mast  
should be.

Milton of Satan,

His spear, to equal which the tallest pine  
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast  
Of some great admiral, were but a wand,  
He walk'd with.—

His diction was in his own time censured as negligent. He seems not to have known, or not to have considered, that words being arbitrary must owe their power to association, and have the influence, and that only, which custom has given them. Language is the dress of thought; and as the noblest mien, or most graceful action, would be degraded and obscured by a garb appropriated to the gross employments of rusticks or mechanicks, so the most heroick sentiments will lose their efficacy, and the most splendid ideas drop their

their magnificence, if they are conveyed by words used commonly upon low and trivial occasions, debased by vulgar mouths, and contaminated by inelegant applications.

Truth indeed is always truth, and reason is always reason ; they have an intrinsic and unalterable value, and constitute that intellectual gold which defies destruction : but gold may be so concealed in baser matter that only a chymist can recover it ; sense may be so hidden in unrefined and plebeian words that none but philosophers can distinguish it ; and both may be so buried in impurities, as not to pay the cost of their extraction.

The diction, being the vehicle of the thoughts, first presents itself to the intellectual eye ; and if the first appearance offends, a further knowledge is not often sought. Whatever professes to benefit by pleasing, must please at once. The pleasures of reason imply something sudden and unexpected ; that which elevates must always surprise. What is perceived by slow degrees may gratify us with the consciousness of improvement,

provement, but will never strike with the sense of pleasure.

Of all this, Cowley seems to have been without knowledge, or without care. He makes no selection of words, nor seeks any neatness of phrase: he has no elegancies either lucky or elaborate; as his endeavours were rather to impress sentences upon the understanding than images on the fancy, he has few epithets, and those scattered without peculiar propriety or nice adaptation. It seems to follow from the necessity of the subject, rather than the care of the writer, that the diction of his heroick poem is less familiar than that of his slightest writings. He has given not the same numbers, but the same diction, to the gentle Anacreon and the tempestuous Pindar.

His versification seems to have had very little of his care; and if what he thinks be true, that his numbers are unmusical only when they are ill read, the art of reading them is at present lost; for they are commonly harsh to modern ears. He has indeed many noble lines, such as the feeble care of  
Waller



Waller never could produce. The bulk of his thoughts sometimes swelled his verse to unexpected and inevitable grandeur; but his excellence of this kind is merely fortuitous: he sinks willingly down to his general carelessness, and avoids with very little care either meanness or asperity.

His contractions are often rugged and harsh:

One flings a mountain, and its rivers too  
Torn up with't.—

His rhymes are very often made by pronouns or particles, or the like unimportant words, which disappoint the ear, and destroy the energy of the line.

His combination of different measures is sometimes dissonant and unpleasing; he joins verses together, of which the former does not slide easily into the latter.

The words *do* and *did*, which so much degrade in present estimation the line that admits them, were in the time of Cowley little censured or avoided; how often he used them,

them, and with how bad an effect, at least to our ears, will appear by a passage, in which every reader will lament to see just and noble thoughts defrauded of their praise by inelegance of language :

Where honour or where conscience *does* not bind,  
 No other law shall shackle me.  
 Slave to myself I ne'er will be ;  
 Nor shall my future actions be confin'd  
 By my own present mind.  
 Who by resolves and vows engag'd *does* stand  
 For days, that yet belong to fate,  
*Does* like an unthrift mortgage his estate,  
 Before it falls into his hand,  
 The bondman of the cloister so,  
 All that he *does* receive *does* always owe.  
 And still as Time comes in, it goes away,  
 Not to enjoy, but debts to pay.  
 Unhappy slave, and pupil to a bell !  
 Which his hours' work as well as hours *does* tell :  
 Unhappy till the last, the kind releasing knell.

His heroick lines are often formed of monosyllables ; but yet they are sometimes sweet and sonorous.

He says of the Messiah,

Round the whole earth his dreaded name shall  
found,

*And reach to worlds that must not yet be found.*

In another place, of David,

Yet bid him go securely, when he sends;

*'Tis Saul that is his foe, and we his friends.*

*The man who has his God, no aid can lack;*

*And we who bid him go, will bring him back.*

He did not write without attempting an improved and scientifick verification; of which it will be best to give his own account subjoined to this line,

Nor can the glory contain itself in th' endless  
space.

“ I am sorry that it is necessary to admonish the most part of readers, that it is not  
“ by negligence that this verse is so loose,  
“ long, and, as it were, vast; it is to paint  
“ in the number the nature of the thing  
“ which it describes, which I would have observed in divers other places of this poem,  
“ that else will pass for very careless verses:  
“ as before,

*And over-runs the neighb'ring fields with violent  
course.*

“ In the second book ;

*Down a precipice deep, down he casts them all.—*

“ —And,

*And fell a-down his shoulders with loose care.*

“ In the third,

*Brass was his helmet, his boots brass, and o'er  
His breast a thick plate of strong brass he wore.*

“ In the fourth,

*Like some fair pine o'er-looking all th' ignobler wood.*

“ And,

*Some from the rocks cast themselves down headlong.*

“ And many more: but it is enough to  
“ instance in a few. The thing is, that the  
“ disposition of words and numbers should  
“ be such, as that, out of the order and sound  
“ of them, the things themselves may be re-  
“ presented. This the Greeks were not so  
“ accurate as to bind themselves to; neither  
“ have our English poets observed it, for  
“ aught I can find. The Latins (*qui musas*  
“ *volunt severiores*) sometimes did it, and  
“ their prince, Virgil, always: in whom the  
“ examples are innumerable, and taken no-

“ tice of by all judicious men, so that it is  
 “ superfluous to collect them.”

I know not whether he has, in many of these instances, attained the representation or resemblance that he purposes. Verse can imitate only sound and motion. A *boundless* verse, a *headlong* verse, and a verse of *brass* or of *strong brass*, seem to comprise very incongruous and unfociable ideas. What there is peculiar in the sound of the line expressing *loose care*, I cannot discover; nor why the *pine* is *taller* in an Alexandrine than in ten syllables.

But, not to defraud him of his due praise, he has given one example of representative versification, which perhaps no other English line can equal :

Begin, be bold, and venture to be wise.  
 He who defers this work from day to day,  
 Does on a river's bank expecting stay  
 Till the whole stream that stopp'd him shall be  
     gone,  
*Which runs, and as it runs, for ever shall run on.*

Cowley was, I believe, the first poet that mingled Alexandrines at pleasure with the common heroick of ten syllables, and from him Dryden borrowed the practice, whether ornamental or licentious. He considered the verse of twelve syllables as elevated and majestic, and has therefore deviated into that measure when he supposes the voice heard of the Supreme Being.

The Author of the *Davideis* is commended by Dryden for having written it in couplets, because he discovered that any staff was too lyrical for an heroick poem; but this seems to have been known before by *May* and *Sandys*, the translators of the *Pharfalia* and the *Metamorphoses*.

In the *Davideis* are some hemistichs, or verses left imperfect by the author, in imitation of Virgil, whom he supposes not to have intended to complete them: that this opinion is erroneous, may be probably concluded, because this truncation is imitated by no subsequent Roman poet; because Virgil himself filled up one broken line in the

heat of recitation ; because in one the sense is now unfinished ; and because all that can be done by a broken verse, a line intersected by a *cæsura* and a full stop will equally effect.

Of triplets in his *Davidis* he makes no use, and perhaps did not at first think them allowable ; but he appears afterwards to have changed his mind, for in the verses on the government of Cromwell he inserts them liberally with great happiness.

After so much criticism on his Poems, the *Essays* which accompany them must not be forgotten. What is said by Sprat of his conversation, that no man could draw from it any suspicion of his excellence in poetry, may be applied to these compositions. No author ever kept his verse and his prose at a greater distance from each other. His thoughts are natural, and his style has a smooth and placid equability, which has never yet obtained its due commendation. Nothing is far-sought, or hard-laboured ; but all is easy without feebleness, and familiar without grossness.

It has been observed by Felton, in his Essay on the Clafficks, that Cowley was beloved by every Muse that he courted; and that he has rivalled the Ancients in every kind of poetry but tragedy.

It may be affirmed, without any encomiaftick fervour, that he brought to his poetick labours a mind replete with learning, and that his pages are embellished with all the ornaments which books could supply; that he was the first who imparted to English numbers the enthusiasm of the greater ode, and the gaiety of the less; that he was equally qualified for spritely sallies, and for lofty flights; that he was among those who freed translation from fervility, and, instead of following his author at a distance, walked by his side; and that if he left versification yet improvable, he left likewise from time to time such specimens of excellence as enabled succeeding poets to improve it.

DENHAM.



---

D E N H A M.

---

H 4



---

## D E N H A M.

**O**F Sir JOHN DENHAM very little is known but what is related of him by Wood, or by himself.

He was born at Dublin in 1615; the only son of Sir John Denham, of Little Horsely in Essex, then chief baron of the Exchequer in Ireland, and of Eleanor, daughter of Sir Garret Moore baron of Mellefont.

Two years afterwards, his father, being made one of the barons of the Exchequer in England, brought him away from his native country, and educated him in London.

In 1631 he was sent to Oxford, where he was considered “ as a dreaming young man,  
“ given

“given more to dice and cards than study;” and therefore gave no prognosticks of his future eminence; nor was suspected to conceal, under sluggishness and laxity, a genius born to improve the literature of his country.

When he was, three years afterwards, removed to Lincoln’s Inn, he prosecuted the common law with sufficient appearance of application; yet did not lose his propensity to cards and dice; but was very often plundered by gamesters.

Being severely reproved for this folly, he professed, and perhaps believed, himself reclaimed; and, to testify the sincerity of his repentance, wrote and published “An Essay upon Gaming.”

He seems to have divided his studies between law and poetry; for, in 1636, he translated the second book of the *Eneid*.

Two years after, his father died; and then, notwithstanding his resolutions and professions, he returned again to the vice of gaming,

gaming, and lost several thousand pounds that had been left him.

In 1641, he published "The Sophy." This seems to have given him his first hold of the publick attention; for Waller remarked, "that he broke out like the Irish rebellion three-score thousand strong, when nobody was aware, or in the least suspected it:" an observation which could have had no propriety, had his poetical abilities been known before.

He was after that pricked for sheriff of Surrey, and made governor of Farnham Castle for the king; but he soon resigned that charge, and retreated to Oxford, where, in 1643, he published "Cooper's Hill."

This poem had such reputation as to excite the common artifice by which envy degrades excellence. A report was spread, that the performance was not his own, but that he had bought it of a vicar for forty pounds. The same attempt was made to rob Addison of his Cato, and Pope of his Essay on Criticism.

In

In 1647, the distresses of the royal family required him to engage in more dangerous employments. He was entrusted by the queen with a message to the king; and, by whatever means, so far softened the ferocity of Hugh Peters, that, by his intercession, admission was procured. Of the king's condescension he has given an account in the dedication of his works.

He was afterwards employed in carrying on the king's correspondence; and, as he says, discharged this office with great safety to the royalists: and being accidentally discovered by the adverse party's knowledge of Mr. Cowley's hand, he happily escaped both for himself and his friends.

He was yet engaged in a greater undertaking. In April 1648, he conveyed James the duke of York from London into France, and delivered him there to the Queen and prince of Wales. This year he published his translation of "Cato Major."

He

He now resided in France, as one of the followers of the exiled King ; and, to divert the melancholy of their condition, was sometimes enjoined by his master to write occasional verses ; one of which amusements was probably his ode or song upon the Embassy to Poland, by which he and lord Crofts procured a contribution of ten thousand pounds from the Scotch, that wandered over that kingdom. Poland was at that time very much frequented by itinerant traders, who, in a country of very little commerce and of great extent, where every man resided on his own estate, contributed very much to the accommodation of life, by bringing to every man's house those little necessaries which it was very inconvenient to want, and very troublesome to fetch. I have formerly read, without much reflection, of the multitude of Scotchmen that travelled with their wares in Poland ; and that their numbers were not small, the success of this negotiation gives sufficient evidence.

About this time, what estate the war and the gamesters had left him was sold, by order

der of the parliament ; and when, in 1652, he returned to England, he was entertained by the earl of Pembroke.

Of the next years of his life there is no account. At the Restoration he obtained, what many missed, the reward of his loyalty ; being made surveyor of the king's buildings, and dignified with the order of the Bath. He seems now to have learned some attention to money ; for Wood says, that he got by his place seven thousand pounds.

After the Restoration he wrote the poem on Prudence and Justice, and perhaps some of his other pieces : and as he appears, whenever any serious question comes before him, to have been a man of piety, he consecrated his poetical powers to religion, and made a metrical version of the psalms of David. In this attempt he has failed ; but, in sacred poetry, who has succeeded ?

It might be hoped that the favour of his master and esteem of the publick would now make him happy. But human felicity  
is



is short and uncertain ; a second marriage brought upon him so much disquiet, as for a time disordered his understanding ; and Butler lampooned him for his lunacy. I know not whether the malignant lines were then made puplick, nor what provocation incited Butler to do that which no provocation can excuse.

His frenzy lasted not long ; and he seems to have regained his full force of mind ; for he wrote afterwards his excellent poem upon the death of Cowley, whom he was not long to survive ; for on the 19th of March, 1668, he was buried by his side.

DENHAM is deservedly considered as one of the fathers of English poetry. "Denham and Waller," says Prior, "improved our versification, and Dryden perfected it." He has given specimens of various composition, descriptive, ludicrous, didactic, and sublime.

He appears to have had, in common with almost all mankind, the ambition of being upon proper occasions *a merry fellow*, and in common with most of them to have been by nature, or by early habits, debarred from it. Nothing is less exhilarating than the ludicrousness of Denham. He does not fail for want of efforts: he is familiar, he is gross; but he is never merry, unless the "Speech against peace in the close Committee" be excepted. For grave burlesque, however, his imitation of Davenant shews him to have been well qualified.

Of his more elevated occasional poems there is perhaps none that does not deserve commendation. In the verses to Fletcher, we  
have

have an image that has since been often adopted :

“ But whither am I stray’d ? I need not raise  
 “ Trophies to thee from other mens dispraise ;  
 “ Nor is thy fame on lesser ruins built,  
 “ Nor need thy juster title the foul guilt  
 “ Of eastern kings, who, to secure their reign,  
 “ Must have their brothers, sons, and kindred  
 “ slain.”

After Denham, Orrery, in one of his prologues,

“ Poets are sultans, if they had their will ;  
 “ For every author would his brother kill.”

And Pope,

“ Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,  
 “ Bear like the Turk no brother near the  
 “ throne.”

But this is not the best of his little pieces : it is excelled by his poem to Fanshaw, and his elegy on Cowley.

His praise of Fanshaw’s version of Guarini, contains a very spritely and judicious character of a good translator :

VOL. I.

I

“ That

" That servile path thou nobly dost decline,  
 " Of tracing word by word, and line by line.  
 " Those are the labour'd births of slavish brains,  
 " Not the effect of poetry, but pains ;  
 " Cheap vulgar arts, whose narrowness affords  
 " No slight for thoughts, but poorly stick at  
     " words.  
 " A new and nobler way thou dost pursue,  
 " To make translations and translators too.  
 " They but preserve the ashes, thou the flame,  
 " True to his sense, but truer to his fame."

The excellence of these lines is greater, as the truth which they contain was not at that time generally known.

His poem on the death of Cowley was his last, and, among his shorter works, his best performance: the numbers are musical, and the thoughts are just.

COOPER'S HILL is the work that confers upon him the rank and dignity of an original author. He seems to have been, at least among us, the author of a species of composition that may be denominated local poetry, of which the fundamental subject is some  
 par-

particular landſchape, to be poetically deſcribed, with the addition of ſuch embellishments as may be ſupplied by hiſtorical retroſpection; or incidental meditation.

To trace a new ſcheme of poetry has in itſelf a very high claim to praiſe, and its praiſe is yet more when it is apparently copied by Garth and Pope; after whoſe names little will be gained by an enumeration of ſmaller poets, that have left ſcarce a corner of the iſland undigniſied by rhyme, or blank verſe.

COOPER'S HILL, if it be maliciously inſpected, will not be found without its faults: The digreſſions are too long, the morality too frequent, and the ſentiments ſometimes ſuch as will not bear a rigorous enquiry.

The four verſes, which, ſince Dryden has commended them; almoſt every writer for a century paſt has imitated, are generally known :

“ O could I flow like thee, and make thy ſtream  
“ My great example, as it is my theme !

- “ Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet  
 “ not dull;  
 “ Strong without rage, without o’er-flowing  
 “ full.”

The lines are in themselves not perfect; for most of the words, thus artfully opposed, are to be understood simply on one side of the comparison, and metaphorically on the other; and if there be any language which does not express intellectual operations by material images, into that language they cannot be translated. But so much meaning is comprised in so few words; the particulars of resemblance are so perspicaciously collected, and every mode of excellence separated from its adjacent fault by so nice a line of limitation; the different parts of the sentence are so accurately adjusted; and the flow of the last couplet is so smooth and sweet; that the passage, however celebrated, has not been praised above its merit. It has beauty peculiar to itself, and must be numbered among those felicities which cannot be produced at will by wit and labour, but must arise unexpectedly in some hour propitious to poetry.

He appears to have been one of the first that understood the necessity of emancipating translation from the drudgery of counting lines and interpreting single words. How much this servile practice obscured the clearest and deformed the most beautiful parts of the ancient authors, may be discovered by a perusal of our earlier versions; some of them the works of men well qualified, not only by critical knowledge, but by poetical genius, who yet, by a mistaken ambition of exactness, degraded at once their originals and themselves.

Denham saw the better way, but has not pursued it with great success. His versions of Virgil are not pleasing; but they taught Dryden to please better. His poetical imitation of Tully on "Old Age" has neither the clearness of prose, nor the spriteliness of poetry.

The "strength of Denham," which Pope so emphatically mentions, is to be found in many lines and couplets, which convey much

meaning in few words, and exhibit the sentiment with more weight than bulk.

On the Thames.

“ Though with those streams he no resemblance  
“ hold,  
“ Whose foam is amber, and their gravel  
“ gold ;  
“ His genuine and less guilty wealth t’ explore,  
“ Search not his bottom, but survey his shore.”

On Strafford.

“ His wisdom such, at once it did appear  
“ Three kingdoms wonder, and three kingdoms  
“ fear ;  
“ Whilst single he stood forth, and seem’d,  
“ although  
“ Each had an army, as an equal foe.  
“ Such was his force of eloquence, to make  
“ The hearers more concern’d than he that spake ;  
“ Each seem’d to act that part he came to see,  
“ And none was more a looker-on than he ;  
“ So did he move our passions, some were known  
“ To wish, for the defence, the crime their own,  
“ Now private pity strove with publick hate,  
“ Reason with rage, and eloquence with fate.”



## On Cowley.

" To him no author was unknown,  
 " Yet what he wrote was all his own ;  
 " Horace's wit, and Virgil's state,  
 " He did not steal, but emulate !  
 " And when he would like them appear,  
 " Their garb, but not their cloaths, did wear."

As one of Denham's principal claims to the regard of posterity arises from his improvement of our numbers, his versification ought to be considered. It will afford that pleasure which arises from the observation of a man of right natural judgement forsaking bad copies by degrees, and advancing towards a better practice, as he gains more confidence in himself.

In his translation of Virgil, written when he was about twenty-one years old, may be still found the old manner of continuing the sense ungracefully from verse to verse.

" Then all those  
 " Who in the dark our fury did escape,  
 " Returning, know our borrow'd arms, and  
 " shape,

“ And differing dialect: then their numbers

“ swell

“ And grow upon us; first Chorcebus fell

“ Before Minerva’s altar; next did bleed

“ Just Ripheus, whom no Trojan did exceed

“ In virtue, yet the gods his fate decreed.

“ Then Hypanis and Dymas, wounded by

“ Their friends; nor thee, Pantheus, thy piety,

“ Nor consecrated mitre, from the same

“ Ill fate could save; my country’s funeral

“ flame

“ And Troy’s cold ashes I attest, and call

“ To witness for myself, that in their fall

“ No foes, no death, nor danger I declin’d,

“ Did, and deserv’d no less, my fate to find.”

From this kind of concatenated metre he afterwards refrained, and taught his followers the art of concluding their sense in couplets; which has perhaps been with rather too much constancy pursued.

This passage exhibits one of those triplets which are not infrequent in this first essay, but which it is to be supposed his maturer judgement disapproved, since in his latter works he has totally forborn them.

His

His rhymes are such as seem found without difficulty, by following the sense; and are for the most part as exact at least as those of other poets, though now and then the reader is shifted off with what he can get.

“ O how *transform'd!*

“ How much unlike that Hector, who *return'd*

“ Clad in Achilles' spoils!”

And again,

“ From thence a thousand lesser poets *sprung,*

“ Like petty princes from the fall of *Rome.*”

Sometimes the weight of rhyme is laid upon a word too feeble to sustain it :

“ Troy confounded falls

“ From all her glories : if it might have stood

“ By any power, by this right hand it *shou'd.*

“ —And though my outward state misfortune

“ *bath*

“ Deprest thus low, it cannot reach my faith.”

“ —Thus by his fraud and our own faith o'er-

“ *come,*

“ A feigned tear destroys us, against *whom*

“ Tydides

“ Tydides nor Achilles could prevail,  
“ Nor ten years conflict, nor a thousand sail.”

He is not very careful to vary the ends of his verses: in one passage the word *die* rhymes three couplets in six.

Most of these petty faults are in his first productions, when he was less skilful, or at least less dexterous in the use of words; and though they had been more frequent, they could only have lessened the grace, not the strength, of his composition. He is one of the writers that improved our taste, and advanced our language, and whom we ought therefore to read with gratitude, though, having done much, he left much to do.

MILTON.

---

M I L T O N.

---



---

---

## M I L T O N.

**T**HE Life of Milton has been already written in so many forms, and with such minute enquiry, that I might perhaps more properly have contented myself with the addition of a few notes to Mr. Fenton's elegant Abridgement, but that a new narrative was thought necessary to the uniformity of this edition.

**JOHN MILTON** was by birth a gentleman, descended from the proprietors of Milton near Thame in Oxfordshire, one of whom forfeited his estate in the times of York and Lancaster. Which side he took I know not; his descendant inherited no veneration for the White Rose.

His

His grandfather John was keeper of the forest of Shotover, a zealous papist, who disinherited his son, because he had forsaken the religion of his ancestors:

His father, John, who was the son disinherited, had recourse for his support to the profession of a scrivener. He was a man eminent for his skill in musick, many of his compositions being still to be found; and his reputation in his profession was such, that he grew rich, and retired to an estate. He had probably more than common literature; as his son addresses him in one of his most elaborate Latin poems. He married a gentlewoman of the name of Caston, a Welsh family, by whom he had two sons, John the poet, and Christopher who studied the law; and adhered, as the law taught him, to the King's party, for which he was awhile persecuted; but having, by his brother's interest, obtained permission to live in quiet, he supported himself by chamber-practice, till, soon after the accession of King James, he was knighted and made a Judge; but, his constitution being too weak for business, he retired  
before



before any disreputable compliances became necessary.

He had likewise a daughter *Annè*, whom he married with a considerable fortune to *Edward Philips*, who came from *Shrewsbury*; and rose in the *Crown-office* to be secondary: by him she had two sons, *John* and *Edward*, who were educated by the poet, and from whom is derived the only authentick account of his domestick manners.

*John*, the poet, was born in his father's house, at the *Spread-Eagle* in *Bread-street*, *Dec. 9, 1608*, between six and seven in the morning. His father appears to have been very solicitous about his education; for he was instructed at first by private tuition under the care of *Thomas Young*, who was afterwards chaplain to the English merchants at *Hamburgh*; and of whom we have reason to think well, since his scholar considered him as worthy of an epistolary *Elegy*.

He was then sent to *St. Paul's School*, under the care of *Mr. Gill*; and removed, in the

the beginning of his sixteenth year, to Christ's College in Cambridge, where he entered a sizar, Feb. 12, 1624.

He was at this time eminently skilled in the Latin tongue; and he himself, by annexing the dates to his first compositions, a boast of which the learned *Politian* had given him an example, seems to commend the earliness of his own proficiency to the notice of posterity. But the products of his vernal fertility have been surpassed by many, and particularly by his contemporary Cowley. Of the powers of the mind it is difficult to form an estimate: many have excelled Milton in their first essays, who never rose to works like *Paradise Lost*.

At fifteen, a date which he uses till he is sixteen, he translated or versified two Psalms, 114 and 136, which he thought worthy of the publick eye; but they raise no great expectations: they would in any numerous school have obtained praise, but not excited

his  
distinct  
tion of excellence

Many

Many of his Elegies appear to have been written in his eighteenth year, by which it appears that he had then read the Roman authors with very nice discernment. I once heard Mr. Hampton, the translator of Polybius, remark what I think is true, that Milton was the first Englishman who, after the revival of letters, wrote Latin verses with classick elegance. If any exceptions can be made, they are very few: Haddon and Ascham, the pride of Elizabeth's reign, however they may have succeeded in prose, no sooner attempt verses than they provoke derision. If we produced any thing worthy of notice before the elegies of Milton, it was perhaps *Alabaster's Roxana*.

Of the exercises which the rules of the University required, some were published by him in his maturer years. They had been undoubtedly applauded; for they were such as few can perform: yet there is reason to suspect that he was regarded in his college with no great fondness. That he obtained no fellowship is certain; but the unkindness with which he was treated was not merely

negative. I am ashamed to relate what I fear is true, that Milton was the last student in either university that suffered the publick indignity of corporal correction.

It was, in the violence of controversial hostility, objected to him, that he was expelled: this he steadily denies, and it was apparently not true; but it seems plain from his own verses to *Diodati*, that he had incurred *Rustication*; a temporary dismissal into the country, with perhaps the loss of a term:

Jam nec arundiferum mihi cura revisere Camum,  
Nec dudum vetiti me laris angit amor;  
Nec duri libet usque minas perferre magistri,  
Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.

I cannot find any meaning but this, which even kindness and reverence can give to the term, *vetiti laris*, "a habitation from which he is excluded;" or how *exile* can be otherwise interpreted. He declares yet more, that he is weary of enduring *the threats of a rigorous master, and something else, which a temper like his cannot undergo*. What was more than threat was evidently punishment. This poem,  
which

which mentions his *exile*, proves likewise that it was not perpetual; for it concludes with a resolution of returning some time to Cambridge.

He took both the usual degrees; that of Batchelor in 1628, and that of Master in 1632; but he left the university with no kindness for its institution, alienated either by the injudicious severity of his governors; or his own captious perverseness. The cause cannot now be known, but the effect appears in his writings. His scheme of education, inscribed to *Hartlib*, supersedes all academical instruction, being intended to comprise the whole time which men usually spend in literature; from their entrance upon grammar, till they proceed, as it is called, *masters of arts*. And in his Discourse on the likeliest Way to remove Hirelings out of the Church, he ingeniously proposes; that the profits of the lands forfeited by the act for superstitious uses, should be applied to such academies all over the land, where languages and arts may be taught together; so that youth may be at once brought up to a competency of learning and an honest trade, by which means such of them as had the gift,

K 2

being

*being enabled to support themselves (without tithes) by the latter, may, by the help of the former, become worthy preachers.*

One of his objections to academical education, as it was then conducted, is, that men designed for orders in the Church were permitted to act plays, *writing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antick and dishonest gestures of Trincalos, buffoons and bawds, prostituting the shame of that ministry which they had, or were near having, to the eyes of courtiers and court-ladies, their grooms and made-moifelles.*

This is sufficiently peevish in a man, who, when he mentions his exile from the college, relates, with great luxuriance, the compensation which the pleasures of the theatre afford him. Plays were therefore only criminal when they were acted by academicks.

He went to the university with a design of entering into the church, but in time altered his mind; for he declared, that whoever became a clergyman must “ subscribe slave, and  
“ take an oath withal, which, unless he took

“ with a conscience that could retch, he must  
 “ straight perjure himself. He thought it  
 “ better to prefer a blameless silence before  
 “ the office of speaking, bought and begun  
 “ with servitude and forswearing.”

These expressions are, I find, applied to the subscription of the Articles; but it seems more probable that they relate to canonical obedience. I know not any of the Articles which seem to thwart his opinions; but the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation.

His unwillingness to engage in the ministry, perhaps not yet advanced to a settled resolution of declining it, appears in a letter to one of his friends, who had reproved his suspended and dilatory life, which he seems to have imputed to an insatiable curiosity, and fantastick luxury of various knowledge. To this he writes a cool and plausible answer, in which he endeavours to persuade him that the delay proceeds not from the delights of desultory study, but from the desire of obtaining more fitness for his task; and that he

goes on, *not taking thought of being late, so it give advantage to be more fit.*

When he left the university, he returned to his father, then residing at Horton in Buckinghamshire, with whom he lived five years; in which time he is said to have read all the Greek and Latin writers. With what limitations this universality is to be understood, who shall inform us?

It might be supposed that he who read so much should have done nothing else; but Milton found time to write the Masque of *Comus*, which was presented at Ludlow, then the residence of the Lord President of Wales, in 1634; and had the honour of being acted by the Earl of Bridgewater's sons and daughter. The fiction is derived from Homer's *Circe*; but we never can refuse to any modern the liberty of borrowing from Homer;

—a quo ceu fonte perenni  
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis.

His next production was *Lycidas*, an elegy, written in 1637, on the death of Mr. King,  
the



the son of Sir John King, secretary for Ireland in the time of Elizabeth, James, and Charles. King was much a favourite at Cambridge, and many of the wits joined to do honour to his memory. Milton's acquaintance with the Italian writers may be discovered by a mixture of longer and shorter verses, according to the rules of Tuscan poetry, and his malignity to the Church by some lines which are interpreted as threatening its extermination.

He is supposed about this time to have written his *Arcades*; for while he lived at Horton he used sometimes to steal from his studies a few days, which he spent at Harefield, the house of the countess dowager of Derby, where the *Arcades* made part of a dramattick entertainment.

He began now to grow weary of the country; and had some purpose of taking chambers in the Inns of Court, when the death of his mother set him at liberty to travel, for which he obtained his father's consent, and Sir Henry Wotton's directions, with the celebrated precept of prudence, *i pensieri stretti*,

*ed il viso sciolto*; "thoughts close, and looks  
"loose."

In 1638 he left England, and went first to Paris; where, by the favour of Lord *Scudamore*, he had the opportunity of visiting *Grotius*, then residing at the French court as ambassador from Christina of Sweden. From Paris he hastened into Italy, of which he had with particular diligence studied the language and literature; and, though he seems to have intended a very quick perambulation of the country, staid two months at Florence; where he found his way into the academies, and produced his compositions with such applause as appears to have exalted him in his own opinion, and confirmed him in the hope, that, "by labour and intense study, which," says he, "I take to be my portion in this  
"life, joined with a strong propensity of nature, he might leave something so written  
"to after-times, as they should not willingly  
"let it die."

It appears, in all his writings, that he had the usual concomitant of great abilities, a lofty and steady confidence in himself,  
perhaps

perhaps not without some contempt of others; for scarcely any man ever wrote so much, and praised so few. Of his praise he was very frugal; as he set its value high, and considered his mention of a name as a security against the waste of time, and a certain preservative from oblivion.

At Florence he could not indeed complain that his merit wanted distinction. Carlo Dati presented him with an encomiastick inscription, in the tumid lapidary style; and Francini wrote him an ode, of which the first stanza is only empty noise; the rest are perhaps too diffuse on common topicks; but the last is natural and beautiful.

From Florence he went to Sienna, and from Sienna to Rome, where he was again received with kindness by the Learned and the Great. Holstenius, the keeper of the Vatican Library, who had resided three years at Oxford, introduced him to Cardinal Barberini; and he, at a musical entertainment, waited for him at the door, and led him by the hand into the assembly. Here Selvaggi praised him in a distich, and Sal-  
fili

filli in a tetrastick ; neither of them of much value. The Italians were gainers by this literary commerce ; for the encomiums with which Milton repaid Salfilli, though not secure against a stern grammarian, turn the balance indisputably in Milton's favour.

Of these Italian testimonies, poor as they are, he was proud enough to publish them before his poems ; though he says, he cannot be suspected but to have known that they were said *non tam de se, quam supra se*.

At Rome, as at Florence, he staid only two months ; a time indeed sufficient, if he desired only to ramble with an explainer of its antiquities, or to view palaces and count pictures ; but certainly too short for the contemplation of learning, policy, or manners.

From Rome he passed on to Naples, in company of a hermit ; a companion from whom little could be expected, yet to him Milton owed his introduction to Mánfo marquis of Villa, who had been before the patron of Tasso. Mánfo was enough delighted with  
his

his accomplishments to honour him with a forry distich, in which he commends him for every thing but his religion; and Milton, in return, address'd him in a Latin poem, which must have rais'd an high opinion of English elegance and literature.

His purpose was now to have visit'd Sicily and Greece; but, hearing of the differences between the king and parliament, he thought it proper to hasten home, rather than pass his life in foreign amusements while his countrymen were contending for their rights. He therefore came back to Rome, though the merchants inform'd him of plots laid against him by the Jesuits, for the liberty of his conversations on religion. He had sense enough to judge that there was no danger, and therefore kept on his way, and acted as before, neither obtruding nor shunning controversy. He had perhaps given some offence by visiting Galileo, then a prisoner in the Inquisition for philosophical heresy; and at Naples he was told by Manso, that, by his declarations on religious questions, he had excluded himself from some distinctions which he should otherwise have had him.

But

But such conduct, though it did not please, was yet sufficiently safe; and Milton staid two months more at Rome, and went on to Florence without molestation.

From Florence he visited Lucca. He afterwards went to Venice; and, having sent away a collection of musick and other books, travelled to Geneva, which he probably considered as the metropolis of orthodoxy. Here he reposed, as in a congenial element, and became acquainted with John Diodati and Frederick Spanheim, two learned professors of Divinity. From Geneva he passed through France; and came home, after an absence of a year and three months.

At his return he heard of the death of his friend Charles Diodati; a man whom it is reasonable to suppose of great merit, since he was thought by Milton worthy of a poem, intituled, *Epitaphium Damonis*, written with the common but childish imitation of pastoral life.

He now hired a lodging at the house of one Ruffel, a taylor in St. Bride's Church-yard,

yard, and undertook the education of John and Edward Philips, his sister's sons. Finding his rooms too little, he took a house and garden in Aldersgate-street, which was not then so much out of the world as it is now; and chose his dwelling at the upper end of a passage, that he might avoid the noise of the street. Here he received more boys, to be boarded and instructed.

Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance, on the man who hastens home, because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and, when he reaches the scene of action, vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school. this is the period of his life from which all his biographers seem inclined to shrink. They are unwilling that Milton should be degraded to a school-master; but, since it cannot be denied that he taught boys, one finds out that he taught for nothing, and another that his motive was only zeal for the propagation of learning and virtue; and all tell what they do not know to be true, only to excuse an act which no wise man will consider

sider as in itself disgraceful. His father was alive; his allowance was not ample; and he supplied its deficiencies by an honest and useful employment.

It is told, that in the art of education he performed wonders; and a formidable list is given of the authors, Greek and Latin, that were read in Aldersgate-street, by youth between ten and fifteen or sixteen years of age. Those who tell or receive these stories should consider that nobody can be taught faster than he can learn. The speed of the horseman must be limited by the power of his horse. Every man, that has ever undertaken to instruct others, can tell what slow advances he has been able to make, and how much patience it requires to recall vagrant inattention, to stimulate sluggish indifference, and to rectify absurd misapprehension.

The purpose of Milton, as it seems, was to teach something more solid than the common literature of Schools, by reading those authors that treat of physical subjects; such as the Georgick, and astronomical treatises of the ancients. This was a scheme of improvement



ment which seems to have busied many literary projectors of that age. Cowley, who had more means than Milton of knowing what was wanting to the embellishments of life, formed the same plan of education in his imaginary College.

But the truth is, that the knowledge of external nature, and of the sciences which that knowledge requires or includes is, not the great or the frequent business of the human mind. Whether we provide for action or conversation, whether we wish to be useful or pleasing, the first requisite is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong; the next is an acquaintance with the history of mankind, and with those examples which may be said to embody truth, and prove by events the reasonableness of opinions. Prudence and Justice are virtues, and excellencies, of all times and of all places; we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometers only by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary; our speculations upon matter are voluntary, and at leisure. Physical knowledge is of such rare emergence, that one man may know another

ther half his life without being able to estimate his skill in hydrostaticks or astronomy ; but his moral and prudential character immediately appears.

Those authors, therefore, are to be read at schools that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation ; and these purposes are best served by poets, orators, and historians.

Let me not be censured for this digression as pedantick or paradoxical ; for if I have Milton against me, I have Socrates on my side. It was his labour to turn philosophy from the study of nature to speculations upon life ; but the innovators whom I oppose are turning off attention from life to nature. They seem to think, that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the stars. Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was, how to do good, and avoid evil.

*Wise*

Ὅτι τοι ἐν μεγάροισι κακὴν ἀγαθὴν τέτυκται.

Of

Of institutions we may judge by their effects. From this wonder-working academy, I do not know that there ever proceeded any man very eminent for knowledge: its only genuine product, I believe, is a small History of Poetry, written in Latin by his nephew, of which perhaps none of my readers has ever heard.

That in his school, as in every thing else which he undertook, he laboured with great diligence, there is no reason for doubting. One part of his method deserves general imitation. He was careful to instruct his scholars in religion. Every Sunday was spent upon theology; in which he dictated a short system, gathered from the writers that were then fashionable in the Dutch universities.

He set his pupils an example of hard study and spare diet; only now and then he allowed himself to pass a day of festivity and indulgence with some gay gentlemen of Gray's Inn.

L

He

He now began to engage in the controversies of the times, and lent his breath to blow the flames of contention. In 1641 he published a treatise of *Reformation*, in two books, against the established Church; being willing to help the Puritans, who were, he says, *inferior to the Prelates in learning*.

Hall bishop of Norwich had published an *Humble Remonstrance*, in defence of Episcopacy; to which, in 1641, six ministers, of whose names the first letters made the celebrated word *Smeectymnuus*, gave their Answer. Of this Answer a Confutation was attempted by the learned *Usher*; and to the Confutation Milton published a Reply, intitled, *Of Prelatical Episcopacy, and whether it may be deduced from the Apostolical Times, by virtue of those testimonies which are alleged to that purpose in some late treatises, one whereof goes under the name of James Lord Bishop of Armagh*.

I have transcribed this title, to shew, by his contemptuous mention of *Usher*, that he had now adopted the puritanical savageness of manners.

manners. His next work was, *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy*, by Mr. John Milton, 1642. In this book he discovers, not with ostentatious exultation, but with calm confidence, his high opinion of his own powers; and promises to undertake something, he yet knows not what, that may be of use and honour to his country. "This," says he, "is not to be obtained but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. To this must be added, industrious and select reading, steady observation, and insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs; till which in some measure be compassed, I refuse not to sustain this expectation." From a promise like this, at once fervid, pious, and rational, might be expected the *Paradise Lost*.

He published the same year two more pamphlets, upon the same question. To one of his antagonists, who affirms that he was vomited out of the university, he answers, in

general terms ; “ The Fellows of the College  
“ wherein I spent some years, at my parting,  
“ after I had taken two degrees, as the man-  
“ ner is, signified many times how much bet-  
“ ter it would content them that I should  
“ stay.—As for the common approbation or  
“ dislike of that place, as now it is, that I  
“ should esteem or disesteem myself the more  
“ for that, too simple is the answerer, if he  
“ think to obtain with me. Of small prac-  
“ tice were the physician who could not  
“ judge, by what she and her sister have of  
“ long time vomited, that the worser stuff  
“ she strongly keeps in her stomach, but the  
“ better she is ever kecking at, and is queasy ;  
“ she vomits now out of sickness ; but before  
“ it be well with her, she must vomit by  
“ strong physick.—The university, in the  
“ time of her better health, and my younger  
“ judgement, I never greatly admired, but  
“ now much less.”

This is surely the language of a man who  
thinks that he has been injured. He pro-  
ceeds to describe the course of his conduct,  
and the train of his thoughts ; and, because  
he has been suspected of incontinence, gives  
an

an account of his own purity: "That if I  
 "be justly charged," says he, "with this  
 "crime, it may come upon me with tenfold  
 "shame."

The style of his piece is rough, and such perhaps was that of his antagonist. This roughness he justifies, by great examples, in a long digression. Sometimes he tries to be humorous: "Lest I should take him for  
 "some chaplain in hand, some squire of the  
 "body to his prelate, one who serves not at  
 "the altar only but at the Court-cupboard,  
 "he will bestow on us a pretty model of  
 "himself; and sets me out half a dozen  
 "ptifical mottos, wherever he had them,  
 "hopping short in the measure of convulsion  
 "fits; in which labour the agony of his wit  
 "having scaped narrowly, instead of well-  
 "sized periods, he greets us with a quantity  
 "of thumbing posies.—And thus ends this  
 "section, or rather dissection of himself." Such is the controversial merriment of Milton: his gloomy seriousness is yet more offensive. Such is his malignity, *that hell grows darker at his frown.*

His father, after Reading was taken by *Effex*, came to reside in his house; and his school increased. At Whitfuntide, in his thirty-fifth year, he married Mary, the daughter of Mr. Powel, a Justice of the Peace in Oxfordshire. He brought her to town with him, and expected all the advantages of a conjugal life. The lady, however, seems not much to have delighted in the pleasures of spare diet and hard study; for, as Philips relates, "having for a month led a philosophical life, after having been used at home to a great house, and much company and joviality, her friends, possibly by her own desire, made earnest suit to have her company the remaining part of the summer; which was granted, upon a promise of her return at Michaelmas."

Milton was too busy to much miss his wife: he pursued his studies; and now and then visited the Lady Margaret Leigh, whom he has mentioned in one of his sonnets. At last Michaelmas arrived; but the Lady had no inclination to return to the fullen gloom of her husband's habitation, and therefore  
very



very willingly forgot her promise. He sent her a letter, but had no answer; he sent more with the same success. It could be alleged that letters miscarry; he therefore dispatched a messenger, being by this time too angry to go himself. His messenger was sent back with some contempt. The family of the Lady were Cavaliers.

In a man whose opinion of his own merit was like Milton's, less provocation than this might have raised violent resentment. Milton soon determined to repudiate her for disobedience; and, being one of those who could easily find arguments to justify inclination, published (in 1644) *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*; which was followed by *The Judgement of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce*; and the next year, his Tetrachordon, *Expositions upon the four chief Places of Scripture which treat of Marriage*.

This innovation was opposed, as might be expected, by the clergy; who, then holding their famous assembly at Westminster, procured that the author should be called before the Lords; "but that House," says

Wood, " whether approving the doctrine, " or not favouring his accusers, did soon dis- " miss him."

There seems not to have been much written against him, nor any thing by any writer of eminence. The antagonist that appeared is styled by him, *a Serving man turned Solicitor*. *Howel* in his letters mentions the new doctrine with contempt; and it was, I suppose, thought more worthy of derision than of confutation. He complains of this neglect in two sonnets, of which the first is contemptible, and the second not excellent.

From this time it is observed that he became an enemy to the Presbyterians, whom he had favoured before. He that changes his party by his humour, is not more virtuous than he that changes it by his interest; he loves himself rather than truth.

His wife and her relations now found that Milton was not an unresisting sufferer of injuries; and perceiving that he had begun to put his doctrine in practice, by courting a young woman of great accomplishments, the  
daughter

daughter of one Doctor Davis, who was however not ready to comply, they resolved to endeavour a re-union. He went sometimes to the house of one Blackborough, his relation, in the lane of St. Martin's-le-Grand, and at one of his usual visits was surpris'd to see his wife come from another room, and implore forgiveness on her knees. He resisted her intreaties for a while; "but partly," says Philips, "his own generous nature, more inclinable to reconciliation than to perseverance in anger or revenge, and partly the strong intercession of friends on both sides, soon brought him to an act of oblivion and a firm league of peace." It were injurious to omit, that Milton afterwards received her father and her brothers in his own house, when they were distressed, with other Royalists,

He published about the same time his *Areopagitica, a Speech of Mr. John Milton for the liberty of unlicensed Printing*. The danger of such unbounded liberty, and the danger of bounding it, have produced a problem in the science of Government, which human understanding seems hitherto unable to

to solve. If nothing may be published but what civil authority shall have previously approved, power must always be the standard of truth; if every dreamer of innovations may propagate his projects, there can be no settlement; if every murmurer at government may diffuse discontent, there can be no peace; and if every sceptick in theology may teach his follies, there can be no religion. The remedy against these evils is to punish the authors; for it is yet allowed that every society may punish, though not prevent, the publication of opinions, which that society shall think pernicious: but this punishment, though it may crush the author, promotes the book; and it seems not more reasonable to leave the right of printing unrestrained, because writers may be afterwards censured, than it would be to sleep with doors unbolted, because by our laws we can hang a thief.

But whatever were his engagements, civil or domestick, poetry was never long out of his thoughts. About this time (1645) a collection of his Latin and English poems appeared, in which the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, with some others, were first published.

He had taken a larger house in Barbican for the reception of scholars; but the numerous relations of his wife, to whom he generously granted refuge for a while, occupied his rooms. In time, however, they went away; "and the house again," says Philips, "now looked like a house of the Muses only, though the accession of scholars was not great. Possibly his having proceeded so far in the education of youth, may have been the occasion of his adversaries calling him pedagogue and school-master; whereas it is well known he never set up for a public school, to teach all the young fry of a parish; but only was willing to impart his learning and knowledge to relations, and the sons of gentlemen who were his intimate friends; and that neither his writings nor his way of teaching ever favoured in the least of pedantry."

Thus laboriously does his nephew extenuate what cannot be denied, and what might be confessed without disgrace. Milton was not a man who could become mean by a mean employment. This, however, his warmest

warmest friends seem not to have found; they therefore shift and palliate. He did not sell literature to all comers at an open shop; he was a chamber-milliner, and measured his commodities only to his friends.

Philips, evidently impatient of viewing him in this state of degradation, tells us that it was not long continued; and, to raise his character again, has a mind to invest him with military splendour: "He is much mistaken," he says, "if there was not about this time " a design of making him an adjutant-general " in Sir William Waller's army. But the " new-modelling of the army proved an obstruction to the design." An event cannot be set at a much greater distance than by having been only *designed, about some time*, if a man *be not much mistaken*. Milton shall be a pedagogue no longer; for, if Philips be not mistaken, somebody at some time designed him for a soldier.

About the time that the army was new-modelled (1645) he removed to a smaller house in Holbourn, which opened backward into Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. He is not known

to

to have published any thing afterwards till the King's death, when, finding his murderers condemned by the Presbyterians, he wrote a treatise to justify it, and *to compose the minds of the people.*

He made some *Remarks on the Articles of Peace between Ormond and the Irish Rebels.* While he contented himself to write, he perhaps did only what his conscience dictated; and if he did not very vigilantly watch the influence of his own passions, and the gradual prevalence of opinions, first willingly admitted and then habitually indulged, if objections, by being overlooked, were forgotten, and desire superinduced conviction, he yet shared only the common weakness of mankind, and might be no less sincere than his opponents. But as faction seldom leaves a man honest, however it might find him, Milton is suspected of having interpolated the book called *Icon Basilike*, which the Council of State, to whom he was now made Latin secretary, employed him to censure, by inserting a prayer taken from *Sidney's Arcadia*, and imputing it to the King; whom he charges, in his *Iconoclastes*, with the use of  
this

this prayer as with a heavy crime, in the indecent language with which prosperity had emboldened the advocates for rebellion to insult all that is venerable or great: “ Who  
 “ would have imagined so little fear in him  
 “ of the true all-seeing Deity---as, imme-  
 “ diately before his death, to pop into the  
 “ hands of the grave bishop that attended  
 “ him, as a special relique of his faintly  
 “ exercises, a prayer stolen word for word  
 “ from the mouth of a heathen woman pray-  
 “ ing to a heathen god?”

The papers which the King gave to Dr. Juxon on the scaffold the regicides took away, so that they were at least the publishers of this prayer; and Dr. Birch, who examined the question with great care, was inclined to think them the forgers. The use of it by adaptation was innocent; and they who could so noisily censure it, with a little extension of their malice could contrive what they wanted to accuse.

King Charles the Second, being now sheltered in Holland, employed Salmasius, professor of Polite Learning at Leyden, to write

a de-



a defence of his father and of monarchy; and, to excite his industry, gave him, as was reported, a hundred Jacobuses. Salmasius was a man of skill in languages, knowledge of antiquity, and sagacity of emendatory criticism, almost exceeding all hope of human attainment; and having, by excessive praises, been confirmed in great confidence of himself, though he probably had not much considered the principles of society or the rights of government, undertook the employment without distrust of his own qualifications; and, as his expedition in writing was wonderful, in 1649 published *Defensio Regis*.

To this Milton was required to write a sufficient answer; which he performed (1651) in such a manner, that Hobbes declared himself unable to decide whose language was best, or whose arguments were worst. In my opinion, Milton's periods are smoother, neater, and more pointed; but he delights himself with teizing his adversary as much as with confuting him. He makes a foolish allusion of Salmasius, whose doctrine he considers as servile and unmanly, to the stream of *Salmacis*, which whoever entered left half his

his virility behind him. Salmasius was a Frenchman, and was unhappily married to a scold. *Tu es Gallus*, says Milton, *et, ut aiunt, nimium gallinaceus*. But his supreme pleasure is to tax his adversary, so renowned for criticism, with vitious Latin. He opens his book with telling that he has used *Persona*, which, according to Milton, signifies only a *Mask*, in a sense not known to the Romans, by applying it as we apply *Person*. But as Nemesis is always on the watch, it is memorable that he has enforced the charge of a solecism by an expression in itself grossly solecistical, when, for one of those supposed blunders, he says, *propino te grammatis tuis vapulandum*. From *vapulo*, which has a passive sense, *vapulandus* can never be derived. No man forgets his original trade: the rights of nations, and of kings, sink into questions of grammar, if grammarians discuss them.

Milton when he undertook this answer was weak of body, and dim of sight; but his will was forward, and what was wanting of health was supplied by zeal. He was rewarded with a thousand pounds, and his book was much read; for paradox, recom-

mended by spirit and elegance, easily gains attention; and he who told every man that he was equal to his King, could hardly want an audience.

That the performance of Salmasius was not dispersed with equal rapidity, or read with equal eagerness, is very credible. He taught only the stale doctrine of authority, and the unpleasing duty of submission; and he had been so long not only the monarch but the tyrant of literature, that almost all mankind were delighted to find him defied and insulted by a new name, not yet considered as any one's rival. If Christina, as is said, commended the *Defence of the People*, her purpose must be to torment Salmasius, who was then at her Court; for neither her civil station nor her natural character could dispose her to favour the doctrine, who was by birth a queen, and by temper despotick.

That Salmasius was, from the appearance of Milton's book, treated with neglect, there is not much proof; but to a man so long accustomed to admiration, a little

praise of his antagonist would be sufficiently offensive, and might incline him to leave Sweden.

He prepared a reply, which, left as it was imperfect, was published by his son in the year of the Restauration. In the beginning, being probably most in pain for his Latinity, he endeavours to defend his use of the word *persona*; but, if I remember right, he misses a better authority than any that he has found, that of Juvenal in his fourth satire :

—Quid agis cum dira & fœdior omni  
Crimine *Persona* est ?

As Salmasius reproached Milton with losing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himself with the belief that he had shortened Salmasius's life, and both perhaps with more malignity than reason. Salmasius died at the Spa, Sept. 3, 1653; and as controvertists are commonly said to be killed by their last dispute, Milton was flattered with the credit of destroying him.

Cromwell had now dismissed the parliament by the authority of which he had destroyed monarchy, and commenced monarch himself, under the title of protector, but with kingly and more than kingly power. That his authority was lawful, never was pretended; he himself founded his right only in necessity; but Milton, having now tasted the honey of publick employment, would not return to hunger and philosophy, but, continuing to exercise his office under a manifest usurpation, betrayed to his power that liberty which he had defended. Nothing can be more just than that rebellion should end in slavery; that he, who had justified the murder of his king, for some acts which to him seemed unlawful, should now sell his services, and his flatteries, to a tyrant; of whom it was evident that he could do nothing lawful.

He had now been blind for some years; but his vigour of intellect was such, that he was not disabled to discharge his office, or continue his controversies: His mind was

too eager to be diverted, and too strong to be subdued.

About this time his first wife died in childbed, having left him three daughters. As he probably did not much love her, he did not long continue the appearance of lamenting her; but after a short time married Catherine, the daughter of one captain Woodcock of Hackney; a woman doubtless educated in opinions like his own. She died within a year, of childbirth, or some distemper that followed it; and her husband has honoured her memory with a poor sonnet.

The first Reply to Milton's *Defensio Populi* was published in 1651, called *Apologia pro Rege & Populo Anglicano, contra Johannis Polypragmatici (alias Miltoni) defensionem destructivam Regis & Populi*. Of this the author was not known; but Milton and his nephew Philips, under whose name he published an answer so much corrected by him that it might be called his own, imputed it to Bramhal; and, knowing him no friend to regicides, thought themselves at liberty to treat

treat him as if they had known what they only suspected.

Next year appeared *Regii Sanguinis clamor ad Cælum*. Of this the author was Peter du Moulin, who was afterwards prebendary of Canterbury; but Morus, or More, a French minister, having the care of its publication, was treated as the writer by Milton in his *Defensio Secunda*, and overwhelmed by such violence of invective, that he began to shrink under the tempest, and gave his persecutors the means of knowing the true author. Du Moulin was now in great danger; but Milton's pride operated against his malignity; and both he and his friends were more willing that Du Moulin should escape than that he should be convicted of mistake.

In this second Defence he shews that his eloquence is not merely satirical; the rudeness of his invective is equalled by the grossness of his flattery. "Deferimur, Cromuelle, "tu solis superes, ad te summa nostrarum "rerum rediit, in te solo consistit, insuperabili tuæ virtuti cedimus cuncti, nemine

“ vel obloquente, nisi qui æquales inæqualis  
 “ ipse honores sibi quærit, aut digniori con-  
 “ cessos invidet, aut non intelligit nihil esse  
 “ in societate hominum magis vel Deo gra-  
 “ tum, vel rationi consentaneum, esse in ci-  
 “ vitate nihil æquius, nihil utilius, quam  
 “ potiri rerum dignissimum. Eum te agno-  
 “ scunt omnes, Cromuelle, ea tu civis maxi-  
 “ mus et \* gloriosissimus, dux publici con-  
 “ filii, exercituum fortissimorum imperator,  
 “ pater patriæ gessisti. Sic tu spontanea bo-  
 “ norum omnium et animitus missa voce fa-  
 “ lutaris.”

Cæsar, when he assumed the perpetual dic-  
 tatorship, had not more servile or more ele-  
 gant flattery. A translation may shew its  
 servility ; but its elegance is less attainable.  
 Having exposed the unskilfulness or selfishness  
 of the former government, “ We were left,”  
 says Milton, “ to ourselves : the whole na-  
 tional interest fell into your hands, and

\* It may be doubted whether *gloriosissimus* be here used  
 with Milton's boasted purity. *Res gloriosa* is an *illustrious*  
*thing* ; but *vir gloriosus* is commonly a *braggart*, as in *miles*  
*gloriosus*.

“ subsists



“ subsists in your abilities. To your virtue,  
 “ overpowering and resistless, every man  
 “ gives way, except some who, without  
 “ equal qualifications, aspire to equal ho-  
 “ nours, or who envy the distinctions of  
 “ merit greater than their own; or who  
 “ have yet to learn, that in the coalition of  
 “ human society nothing is more pleasing to  
 “ God, or more agreeable to reason, than  
 “ that the highest mind should have the so-  
 “ vereign power. Such, Sir, are you by ge-  
 “ neral confession; such are the things at-  
 “ tributed by you, the greatest and most glo-  
 “ rious of our countrymen, the director of  
 “ our publick councils, the leader of un-  
 “ conquered armies, the father of your  
 “ country; for by that title does every good  
 “ man hail you, with sincere and voluntary  
 “ praise.”

Next year, having defended all that want-  
 ed defence, he found leisure to defend him-  
 self. He undertook his own vindication  
 against More, whom he declares in his title  
 to be justly called the author of the *Regii*  
*Sanguinis clamor*. In this there is no want of  
 vehemence nor eloquence, nor does he forget

his wonted wit. "*Morus es? an Momus? an  
"uterque idem est?"* He then remembers that *Morus* is Latin for a Mulberry-tree, and hints at the known transformation :

—Poma alba ferebat  
Quæ post nigra tulit *Morus*.

With this piece ended his controversies; and he from this time gave himself up to his private studies and his civil employment.

As secretary to the Protector he is supposed to have written the Declaration of the reasons for a war with Spain. His agency was considered as of great importance; for when a treaty with Sweden was artfully suspended, the delay was publicly imputed to Mr. Milton's indisposition; and the Swedish agent was provoked to express his wonder, that only one man in England could write Latin, and that man blind.

Being now forty-seven years old, and seeing himself disencumbered from external interruptions, he seems to have recollected his former purposes, and planned three great  
4 works

works for his future employment : an epick poem, the history of his country, and a dictionary of the Latin tongue.

To collect a dictionary, seems a work of all others least practicable in a state of blindness, because it depends upon perpetual and minute inspection and collation. Nor would Milton probably have begun it, after he had lost his eyes ; but, having had it always before him, he continued it, says Philips, *almost to his dying-day ; but the papers were so discomposed and deficient, that they could not be fitted for the press.* The compilers of the Latin dictionary, printed at Cambridge, had the use of them in three folios ; but what was their fate afterwards is not known.

To compile a history from various authors, when they can only be consulted by other eyes, is not easy, nor possible, but with more skilful and attentive help than can be commonly obtained ; and it was probably the difficulty of consulting and comparing that stopped Milton's narrative at the Conquest ; a period at which affairs were not yet  
very

very intricate, nor authors very numerous.

For the subject of his epick poem, after much deliberation, *long chusing, and beginning late*, he fixed upon *Paradise Lost*; a design so comprehensive, that it could be justified only by success. He had once designed to celebrate King Arthur, as appears from his verses to Manus; but Arthur was reserved, says Fepton, to another destiny.

It appears, by some sketches of poetical projects left in manuscript, and to be seen in a library at Cambridge, that he had digested his thoughts on this subject into one of those wild dramas which were anciently called Mysteries; and Philips had seen what he terms part of a tragedy, beginning with the first ten lines of Satan's address to the Sun. These Mysteries consist of allegorical persons; such as *Justice, Mercy, Faith*. Of the tragedy or mystery of *Paradise Lost* there are two plans:

The

## The Persons.

Michael.  
 Chorus of Angels.  
 Heavenly Love.  
 Lucifer.  
 Adam, } with the  
 Eve, } Serpent.  
 Conscience.  
 Death.  
 Labour, }  
 Sicknefs, }  
 Difcontent, } Mutes.  
 Ignorance, }  
 with others; }  
 Faith.  
 Hope.  
 Charity.

## The Persons.

Mofes.  
 Divine Juftice, Wif-  
 dom, Heavenly Love.  
 The Evening Star,  
 Hefperus.  
 Chorus of Angels.  
 Lucifer.  
 Adam.  
 Eve.  
 Conscience.  
 Labour, }  
 Sicknefs, }  
 Difcontent, } Mutes.  
 Ignorance, }  
 Fear, }  
 Death; }  
 Faith.  
 Hope.  
 Charity.

*Paradife Loft.*

## The Persons.

Mofes, *προλογίζεαι*, recounting how he af-  
 fumed his true body; that it corrupts not,  
 becaufe

because it is with God in the mount ; declares the like of Enoch and Eliah ; besides the purity of the place, that certain pure winds, dews, and clouds, preserve it from corruption ; whence exhorts to the sight of God ; tells, they cannot see Adam in the state of innocence, by reason of their sin.

Justice,	}	debating what should become of man, if he fall.
Mercy,		
Wisdom,		

Chorus of Angels singing a hymn of the Creation.

## A C T II.

Heavenly Love.

Evening Star.

Chorus sing the marriage-song, and describe Paradise.

## A C T III.

Lucifer, contriving Adam's ruin.

Chorus fears for Adam, and relates Lucifer's rebellion and fall.

A C T

## A C T IV.

Adam, }  
 Eve, } fallen.

Conscience cites them to God's examination.

Chorus bewails, and tells the good Adam has  
 lost.

## A C T V.

Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise.

— — — presented by an angel with

Labour, Grief, Hatred, Envy,  
 War, Famine, Pestilence,  
 Sickness, Discontent, Ignorance, Fear, Death, } Mutes.

To whom he gives their names. Likewise  
 Winter, Heat, Tempest, &c.

Faith,  
 Hope,  
 Charity, } comfort him, and instruct him.

Chorus briefly concludes.

Such was his first design, which could  
 have produced only an allegory, or mystery.  
 The following sketch seems to have attained  
 more maturity.

Adam

## Adam unparadised :

The angel Gabriel, either descending or entering ; shewing, since this globe was created, his frequency as much on earth as in heaven : describes Paradise. Next, the Chorus, shewing the reason of his coming to keep his watch in Paradise, after Lucifer's rebellion, by command from God ; and withal expressing his desire to see and know more concerning this excellent new creature, man. The angel Gabriel, as by his name signifying a prince of power, tracing Paradise with a more free office, passes by the station of the Chorus, and, desired by them, relates what he knew of man ; as the creation of Eve, with their love and marriage. After this, Lucifer appears ; after his overthrow, bemoans himself, seeks revenge on man. The Chorus prepare resistance at his first approach. At last, after discourse of enmity on either side, he departs ; whereat the Chorus sings of the battle and victory in heaven, against him and his accomplices : as before, after the first act, was sung a hymn of the creation. Here again may appear Lucifer, relating



relating and insulting in what he had done to the destruction of man. Man next, and Eve having by this time been seduced by the Serpent, appears confusedly covered with leaves. Conscience, in a shape, accuses him; Justice cites him to the place whither Jehovah called for him. In the mean while, the Chorus entertains the stage, and is informed by some angel the manner of the Fall. Here the Chorus bewails Adam's fall; Adam then and Eve return; accuse one another; but especially Adam lays the blame to his wife; is stubborn in his offence. Justice appears, reasons with him, convinces him. The Chorus admonisheth Adam, and bids him beware Lucifer's example of impenitence. The angel is sent to banish them out of Paradise; but before causes to pass before his eyes, in shapes, a mask of all the evils of this life and world. He is humbled, relents, despairs: at last appears Mercy, comforts him, promises the Messiah; then calls in Faith, Hope, and Charity; instructs him; he repents, gives God the glory, submits to his penalty. The Chorus briefly concludes. Compare this with the former draught."

These

These are very imperfect rudiments of *Paradise Lost*; but it is pleasant to see great works in their seminal state, pregnant with latent possibilities of excellence; nor could there be any more delightful entertainment than to trace their gradual growth and expansion, and to observe how they are sometimes suddenly advanced by accidental hints, and sometimes slowly improved by steady meditation.

Invention is almost the only literary labour which blindness cannot obstruct, and therefore he naturally solaced his solitude by the indulgence of his fancy, and the melody of his numbers. He had done what he knew to be necessarily previous to poetical excellence; he had made himself acquainted with *seemly arts and affairs*; his comprehension was extended by various knowledge, and his memory stored with intellectual treasures. He was skilful in many languages, and had by reading and composition attained the full mastery of his own. He would have wanted little help from books, had he retained the power of perusing them.

But

But while his greater designs were advancing, having now, like many other authors, caught the love of publication, he amused himself, as he could, with little productions. He sent to the press (1658) a manuscript of Raleigh, called the *Cabinet Council*; and next year gratified his malevolence to the clergy, by a *Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Cases, and the Means of removing Hirelings out of the Church*.

Oliver was now dead; Richard was constrained to resign: the system of extemporary government, which had been held together only by force, naturally fell into fragments when that force was taken away; and Milton saw himself and his cause in equal danger. But he had still hope of doing something. He wrote letters, which Toland has published, to such men as he thought friends to the new commonwealth; and even in the year of the Restoration he *bated no jot of heart or hope*, but was fantastical enough to think that the nation, agitated as it was, might be settled by a pamphlet, called *A ready and easy Way to establish a Free Commonwealth*;

which was, however, enough considered to be both seriously and ludicrously answered.

The obstinate enthusiasm of the commonwealthmen was very remarkable. When the King was apparently returning, Harrington, with a few associates as fanatical as himself, used to meet, with all the gravity of political importance, to settle an equal government by rotation; and Milton, kicking when he could strike no longer, was foolish enough to publish, a few weeks before the Restoration, *Notes* upon a sermon preached by one Griffiths, intituled, *The Fear of God and the King*. To these notes an answer was written by L'Estrange, in a pamphlet petulantly called *No blind Guides*.

But whatever Milton could write, or men of greater activity could do, the King was now evidently approaching with the irresistible approbation of the people. He was therefore no longer secretary, and was consequently obliged to quit the house which he held by his office; and, proportioning his sense of danger to his opinion of the importance of his writings, thought it convenient

to

to seek some shelter, and hid himself for a time in Bartholomew-Close by West Smithfield.

I cannot but remark a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers : every house in which he resided is historically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his presence.

The King, with lenity of which the world has had perhaps no other example, declined to be the judge or avenger of his own or his father's wrongs ; and promised to admit into the Act of Oblivion all, except those whom the parliament should except ; and the parliament doomed none to capital punishment but the wretches who had immediately cooperated in the murder of the King. Milton was certainly not one of them ; he had only justified what they had done.

This justification was indeed sufficiently offensive ; and (June 16) an order was issued to seize Milton's *Defence*, and Goodwin's *Obstructors of Justice*, another book of the same

tendency, and burn them by the common hangman. The attorney-general was ordered to prosecute the authors; but Milton was not seized, nor perhaps very diligently pursued.

Not long after (August 19) the flutter of innumerable bosoms was stilled by an act, which the King, that his mercy might want no recommendation of elegance, rather called an *act of oblivion* than of *grace*. Goodwin was named, with nineteen more, as incapacitated for any publick trust; but of Milton there was no exception.

Of this tenderness shewn to Milton, the curiosity of mankind has not forbore to enquire the reason. Burnet thinks he was forgotten; but this is another instance which may confirm Dalrymple's observation, who says, "that whenever Burnet's narrations are examined, he appears to be mistaken."

Forgotten he was not; for his prosecution was ordered; it must be therefore by design that he was included in the general oblivion. He is said to have had friends in the House, such as Marvel, Morrice, and Sir Thomas Clarges;

Charges; and undoubtedly a man like him must have had influence. A very particular story of his escape is told by Richardson in his Memoirs, which he received from Pope, as delivered by Betterton, who might have heard it from Davenant. In the war between the King and Parliament, Davenant was made prisoner, and condemned to die; but was spared at the request of Milton. When the turn of success brought Milton into the like danger, Davenant repaid the benefit by appearing in his favour. Here is a reciprocation of generosity and gratitude so pleasing, that the tale makes its own way to credit. But if help were wanted, I know not where to find it. The danger of Davenant is certain from his own relation; but of his escape there is no account. Betterton's narration can be traced no higher; it is not known that he had it from Davenant. We are told that the benefit exchanged was life for life; but it seems not certain that Milton's life ever was in danger. Goodwin, who had committed the same kind of crime, escaped with incapacitation; and as exclusion from publick trust is a punishment which the power of government can commonly inflict

without the help of a particular law, it required no great interest to exempt Milton from a censure little more than verbal. Something may be reasonably ascribed to veneration and compassion; to veneration of his abilities, and compassion for his distresses, which made it fit to forgive his malice for his learning. He was now poor and blind; and who would pursue with violence an illustrious enemy, depressed by fortune, and disarmed by nature?

The publication of the act of oblivion put him in the same condition with his fellow-subjects. He was, however, upon some pretence not now known, in the custody of the serjeant in December; and, when he was released, upon his refusal of the fees demanded, he and the serjeant were called before the House. He was now safe within the shade of oblivion, and knew himself to be as much out of the power of a griping officer as any other man. How the question was determined is not known. Milton would hardly have contended, but that he knew himself to have right on his side.

He



He then removed to Jewin-street, near Aldersgate-street; and being blind, and by no means wealthy, wanted a domestick companion and attendant; and therefore, by the recommendation of Dr. Paget, married Elizabeth Minshul, of a gentleman's family in Cheshire, probably without a fortune. All his wives were virgins; for he has declared that he thought it gross and indelicate to be a second husband: upon what other principles his choice was made, cannot now be known; but marriage afforded not much of his happiness. The first wife left him in disgust, and was brought back only by terror; the second, indeed, seems to have been more a favourite, but her life was short. The third, as Philips relates, oppressed his children in his life-time, and cheated them at his death.

Soon after his marriage, according to an obscure story, he was offered the continuance of his employment; and, being pressed by his wife to accept it, answered, "You, like  
"other women, want to ride in your coach;  
"my wish is to live and die an honest man."  
If he considered the Latin secretary as exer-

cising any of the powers of government, he that had shared authority either with the parliament or Cromwell, might have forbore to talk very loudly of his honesty; and if he thought the office purely ministerial, he certainly might have honestly retained it under the king. But this tale has too little evidence to deserve a disquisition; large offers and sturdy rejections are among the most common topicks of falsehood.

Wise  
& true  
remark

He had so much either of prudence or gratitude, that he forbore to disturb the new settlement with any of his political or ecclesiastical opinions, and from this time devoted himself to poetry and literature. Of his zeal for learning, in all its parts, he gave a proof by publishing, the next year (1661) *Accidence commenced Grammar*; a little book which has nothing remarkable, but that its author, who had been lately defending the supreme powers of his country, and was then writing *Paradise Lost*, could descend from his elevation to rescue children from the perplexity of grammatical confusion, and the trouble of lessons unnecessarily repeated.

About

About this time Elwood the quaker, being recommended to him as one who would read Latin to him, for the advantage of his conversation ; attended him every afternoon, except on Sundays. Milton, who, in his letter to Hartlib, had declared, that *to read Latin with an English mouth is as ill a bearing as Law French*, required that Elwood should learn and practise the Italian pronunciation, which, he said, was necessary, if he would talk with foreigners. This seems to have been a task troublesome without use. There is little reason for preferring the Italian pronunciation to our own, except that it is more general ; and to teach it to an Englishman is only to make him a foreigner at home. He who travels, if he speaks Latin, may soon learn the sounds which every native gives it, that he need make no provision before his journey ; and if strangers visit us, it is their business to practise such conformity to our modes as they expect from us in their own countries. Elwood complied with the directions, and improved himself by his attendance ; for he relates, that Milton, having a curious ear, knew by his voice when he read  
what

what he did not understand, and would stop him, and *open the most difficult passages.*

In a short time he took a house in the *Artillery Walk*, leading to *Bunhill Fields*; the mention of which concludes the register of Milton's removals and habitations. He lived longer in this place than in any other.

He was now busied by *Paradise Lost*. Whence he drew the original design has been variously conjectured, by men who cannot bear to think themselves ignorant of that which, at last, neither diligence nor sagacity can discover. Some find the hint in an Italian tragedy. Voltaire tells a wild and unauthorised story of a farce seen by Milton in Italy, which opened thus : *Let the Rainbow be the Fiddlestick of the Fiddle of Heaven*. It has been already shewn, that the first conception was of a tragedy or mystery, not of a narrative, but a dramattick work, which he is supposed to have begun to reduce to its present form about the time (1655) when he finished his dispute with the defenders of the king.

He long before had promised to adorn his native country by some great performance, while he had yet perhaps no settled design, and was stimulated only by such expectations as naturally arose from the survey of his attainments, and the consciousness of his powers. What he should undertake, it was difficult to determine. He was *long chusing, and began late.*

While he was obliged to divide his time between his private studies and affairs of state, his poetical labour must have been often interrupted; and perhaps he did little more in that busy time than construct the narrative, adjust the episodes, proportion the parts, accumulate images and sentiments, and treasure in his memory, or preserve in writing, such hints as books or meditation would supply. Nothing particular is known of his intellectual operations while he was a statesman; for, having every help and accommodation at hand, he had no need of uncommon expedients.

Being driven from all publick stations, he is yet too great not to be traced by curiosity  
to

to his retirement; where he has been found by Mr. Richardson, the fondest of his admirers, sitting *before his door in a grey coat of coarse cloth, in warm sultry weather, to enjoy the fresh air; and so, as well as in his own room, receiving the visits of people of distinguished parts as well as quality.* His visitors of high quality must now be imagined to be few; but men of parts might reasonably court the conversation of a man so generally illustrious, that foreigners are reported, by Wood, to have visited the house in Bread-street where he was born.

According to another account, he was seen in a small house, *neatly enough dressed in black cloaths, sitting in a room hung with rusty green; pale but not cadaverous, with chalkstones in his hands.* He said, that if it were not for the gout, his blindness would be tolerable.

In the intervals of his pain, being made unable to use the common exercises, he used to swing in a chair, and sometimes played upon an organ.

He was now confessedly and visibly employed upon his poem, of which the progress might be noted by those with whom he was familiar; for he was obliged, when he had composed as many lines as his memory would conveniently retain, to employ some friend in writing them, having, at least for part of the time, no regular attendant. This gave opportunity to observations and reports.

Mr. Philips observes, that there was a very remarkable circumstance in the composition of *Paradise Lost*, “ which I have a particular reason,” says he, “ to remember; “ for whereas I had the perusal of it from “ the very beginning, for some years, as I “ went from time to time to visit him, in “ parcels of ten, twenty, or thirty verses at “ a time (which, being written by whatever “ hand came next, might possibly want “ correction as to the orthography and pointing), having, as the Summer came on, “ not been shewed any for a considerable “ while, and desiring the reason thereof, was “ answered, that his vein never happily flowed “ but from the Autumnal Equinox to the “ Vernal;

“ Vernal; and that whatever he attempted  
 “ at other times was never to his satisfaction,  
 “ though he courted his fancy never so  
 “ much; so that, in all the years he was  
 “ about this poem, he may be said to have  
 “ spent half his time therein.”

Upon this relation Toland remarks, that in his opinion Philips has mistaken the time of the year; for Milton, in his Elegies, declares that with the advance of the Spring he feels the increase of his poetical force, *redunt in carmina vires*. To this it is answered, that Philips could hardly mistake time so well marked; and it may be added, that Milton might find different times of the year favourable to different parts of life. Mr. Richardson conceives it impossible that *such a work should be suspended for six months, or for one. It may go on faster or slower, but it must go on.* By what necessity it must continually go on, or why it might not be laid aside and resumed, it is not easy to discover.

This dependance of the soul upon the seasons, those temporary and periodical ebbs and flows of intellect, may, I suppose, justly be derided



derided as the fumes of vain imagination. *Sapiens dominabitur astris.* The author that thinks himself weather-bound will find, with a little help from hellebore, that he is only idle or exhausted. But while this notion has possession of the head, it produces the inability which it supposes. Our powers owe much of their energy to our hopes; *possunt quia posse videntur.* When success seems attainable, diligence is enforced; but when it is admitted that the faculties are suppressed by a cross wind, or a cloudy sky, the day is given up without resistance; for who can contend with the course of Nature?

From such prepossessions Milton seems not to have been free. There prevailed in his time an opinion that the world was in its decay, and that we have had the misfortune to be produced in the decrepitude of Nature. It was suspected that the whole creation languished, that neither trees nor animals had the height or bulk of their predecessors, and that every thing was daily sinking in gradual diminution. Milton appears to suspect that souls partake of the general degeneracy, and is not without some fear that his book is to  
be

be written in *an age too late* for heroick poesy.

Another opinion wanders about the world, and sometimes finds reception among wise men ; an opinion that restrains the operations of the mind to particular regions, and supposes that a luckless mortal may be born in a degree of latitude too high or too low for wisdom or for wit. From this fancy, wild as it is, he had not wholly cleared his head, when he feared lest the *climate* of his country might be *too cold* for flights of imagination.

Into a mind already occupied by such fancies, another not more reasonable might easily find its way. He that could fear lest his genius had fallen upon too old a world, or too chill a climate, might consistently magnify to himself the influence of the seasons, and believe his faculties to be vigorous only half the year.

His submission to the seasons was at least more reasonable than his dread of decaying Nature, or a frigid zone ; for general causes  
operate

operate uniformly in a general abatement of mental power: if less could be performed by the writer, less likewise would content the judges of his work. Among this lagging race of frosty grovellers he might still have risen into eminence by producing something which *they should not willingly let die*. However inferior to the heroes who were born in better ages, he might still be great among his contemporaries, with the hope of growing every day greater in the dwindle of posterity. He might still be the giant of the pygmies, the one-eyed monarch of the blind.

Of his artifices of study, or particular hours of composition, we have little account, and there was perhaps little to be told. Richardson, who seems to have been very diligent in his enquiries, but discovers always a wish to find Milton discriminated from other men, relates, that “ he would sometimes lie “ awake whole nights, but not a verse could “ he make; and on a sudden his poetical “ faculty would rush upon him with an *impetus*, or *astrum*, and his daughter was immediately called to secure what came. At “ other times he would dictate perhaps forty  
VOL. I. O “ lines

“ lines in a breath, and then reduce them to  
“ half the number.”

These bursts of light, and involutions of darkness; these transient and involuntary excursions and retrocessions of invention, having some appearance of deviation from the common train of Nature, are eagerly caught by the lovers of a wonder. Yet something of this inequality happens to every man in every mode of exertion, manual or mental. The mechanick cannot handle his hammer and his file at all times with equal dexterity; there are hours, he knows not why, when *his hand is out*. By Mr. Richardson's relation, casually conveyed, much regard cannot be claimed. That, in his intellectual hour, Milton called for his daughter *to secure what came*, may be questioned; for unluckily it happens to be known that his daughters were never taught to write; nor would he have been obliged, as is universally confessed, to have employed any casual visiter in disburthening his memory, if his daughter could have performed the office.

The

The story of reducing his exuberance has been told of other authors, and, though doubtless true of every fertile and copious mind, seems to have been gratuitously transferred to Milton.

What he has told us, and we cannot now know more, is, that he composed much of his poem in the night and morning, I suppose before his mind was disturbed with common business; and that he poured out with great fluency his *unpremeditated verse*. Verification, free, like his, from the distresses of rhyme, must, by a work so long, be made prompt and habitual; and, when his thoughts were once adjusted, the words would come at his command.

At what particular times of his life the parts of his work were written, cannot often be known. The beginning of the third book shews that he had lost his sight; and the Introduction to the seventh, that the return of the King had clouded him with discountenance; and that he was offended by the licentious festivity of the Restoration. There are

no other internal notes of time. Milton, being now cleared from all effects of his disloyalty, had nothing required from him but the common duty of living in quiet, to be rewarded with the common right of protection: but this, which, when he sculked from the approach of his King, was perhaps more than he hoped, seems not to have satisfied him; for no sooner is he safe, than he finds himself in danger, *fallen on evil days and evil tongues, and with darkness and with danger compass'd round*. This darkness, had his eyes been better employed, had undoubtedly deserved compassion; but to add the mention of danger was ungrateful and unjust. He was fallen indeed on *evil days*; the time was come in which regicides could no longer boast their wickedness. But of *evil tongues* for Milton to complain, required impudence at least equal to his other powers; Milton, whose warmest advocates must allow, that he never spared any asperity of reproach or brutality of insolence.

But the charge itself seems to be false; for it would be hard to recollect any reproach cast upon him, either serious or ludicrous, through

through the whole remaining part of his life. He pursued his studies, or his amusements, without persecution, molestation, or insult. Such is the reverence paid to great abilities, however misused: they who contemplated in Milton the scholar and the wit, were contented to forget the reviler of his King.

When the plague (1665) raged in London, Milton took refuge at Chalfont in Bucks; where Elwood, who had taken the house for him, first saw a complete copy of *Paradise Lost*, and, having perused it, said to him, "Thou hast said a great deal upon *Paradise Lost*; what hast thou to say upon *Paradise Found*?"

Next year, when the danger of infection had ceased, he returned to Bunhill-fields, and designed the publication of his poem. A license was necessary, and he could expect no great kindness from a chaplain of the archbishop of Canterbury. He seems, however, to have been treated with tenderness; for though objections were made to particular passages, and among them to the simile of the sun eclipsed in the first book, yet the

license was granted; and he sold his copy, April 27, 1667, to Samuel Simmons, for an immediate payment of five pounds, with a stipulation to receive five pounds more when thirteen hundred should be sold of the first edition; and again, five pounds after the sale of the same number of the second edition; and another five pounds after the same sale of the third. None of the three editions were to be extended beyond fifteen hundred copies.

The first edition was of ten books, in a small quarto. The titles were varied from year to year; and an advertisement and the arguments of the books were omitted in some copies, and inserted in others.

The sale gave him in two years a right to his second payment, for which the receipt was signed April 26, 1669. The second edition was not given till 1674; it was printed in small octavo; and the number of books was increased to twelve, by a division of the seventh and twelfth; and some other small improvements were made. The third edition was published in 1678; and the widow,



dow, to whom the copy was then to devolve, fold all her claims to Simmons for eight pounds, according to her receipt given Dec. 21, 1680. Simmons had already agreed to transfer the whole right to Brabazon Aylmer for twenty-five pounds; and Aylmer fold to Jacob Tonson half, August 17, 1683, and half, March 24, 1690, at a price considerably enlarged.

The slow sale and tardy reputation of this poem have been always mentioned as evidences of neglected merit, and of the uncertainty of literary fame; and enquiries have been made, and conjectures offered, about the causes of its long obscurity and late reception. But has the case been truly stated? Have not lamentation and wonder been lavished on an evil that was never felt?

That in the reigns of Charles and James the *Paradise Lost* received no publick acclamations, is readily confessed. Wit and literature were on the side of the Court: and who that solicited favour or the fashion would venture to praise the defender of the regicides? All that he himself could think

his due, from *evil tongues* in *evil days*, was that reverential silence which was generously preserved. But it cannot be inferred that his poem was not read, or not, however unwillingly, admired.

The sale, if it be considered, will justify the publick. Those who have no power to judge of past times but by their own, should always doubt their conclusions. The sale of books was not in Milton's age what it is in the present. To read was not then a general amusement; neither traders, nor often gentlemen, thought themselves disgraced by ignorance. The women had not then aspired to literature, nor was every house supplied with a closet of books. Those, indeed, who professed learning, were not less learned than at any other time; but of that middle race of students who read for pleasure or accomplishment, and who buy the numerous products of modern typography, the number was then comparatively small. To prove the paucity of readers, it may be sufficient to remark, that the nation had been satisfied, from 1623 to 1664, that is, forty-one years, with only two editions of the works of

Shakspeare,

in 41 y<sup>rs</sup> not more than

1000 Editions of

Shakspeare sold

1623 to 64

Shakspeare, which probably did not together make one thousand copies.

The sale of thirteen hundred copies in two years, in opposition to so much recent enmity, and to a style of versification new to all and disgusting to many, was an uncommon example of the prevalence of genius. The demand did not immediately increase; for many more readers than were supplied at first the nation did not afford. Only three thousand were sold in eleven years; for it forced its way without assistance: its admirers did not dare to publish their opinion; and the opportunities now given of attracting notice by advertisements were then very few; for the means of proclaiming the publication of new books have been produced by that general literature which now pervades the nation through all its ranks.

But the reputation and price of the copy still advanced, till the Revolution put an end to the secrecy of love, and *Paradise Lost* broke into open view with sufficient security of kind reception.

Fancy

Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked his reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current through fear and silence. I cannot but conceive him calm and confident, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting, without impatience, the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.

In the mean time he continued his studies, and supplied the want of sight by a very odd expedient, of which Philips gives the following account :

Mr. Philips tells us, “ that though our author had daily about him one or other to read, some persons of man’s estate, who, of their own accord, greedily caught at the opportunity of being his readers, that they might as well reap the benefit of what they read to him, as oblige him by the benefit of their reading ; and others of younger years were sent by their parents to  
“ the

“ the same end : yet excusing only the ..  
“ eldest daughter, by reason of her bodily  
“ infirmity, and difficult utterance of speech,  
“ (which, to say truth, I doubt was the  
“ principal cause of excusing her), the other  
“ two were condemned to the performance  
“ of reading, and exactly pronouncing of  
“ all the languages of whatever book he  
“ should, at one time or other, think fit to  
“ peruse, viz. the Hebrew (and I think the  
“ Syriac), the Greek, the Latin, the Italian,  
“ Spanish, and French. All which sorts of  
“ books to be confined to read, without un-  
“ derstanding one word, must needs be a trial  
“ of patience almost beyond endurance. Yet  
“ it was endured by both for a long time,  
“ though the irksomeness of this employ-  
“ ment could not be always concealed, but  
“ broke out more and more into expressions  
“ of uneasiness ; so that at length they were  
“ all, even the eldest also, sent out to learn  
“ some curious and ingenious sorts of manu-  
“ facture, that are proper for women to  
“ learn ; particularly embroideries in gold or  
“ silver.”

In

In the scene of misery which this mode of intellectual labour sets before our eyes, it is hard to determine whether the daughters or the father are most to be lamented. A language not understood can never be so read as to give pleasure, and very seldom so as to convey meaning. If few men would have had resolution to write books with such embarrassments, few likewise would have wanted ability to find some better expedient.

Three years after his *Paradise Lost* (1667), he published his *History of England*, comprising the whole fable of Geoffry of Monmouth, and continued to the Norman invasion. Why he should have given the first part, which he seems not to believe, and which is universally rejected, it is difficult to conjecture. The style is harsh; but it has something of rough vigour, which perhaps may often strike, though it cannot please.

On this history the licenser again fixed his claws, and before he would transmit it to the press tore out several parts. Some censures of the Saxon monks were taken away,  
4 left

left they should be applied to the modern clergy; and a character of the Long Parliament, and Assembly of Divines, was excluded; of which the author gave a copy to the earl of Anglesea, and which, being afterwards published, has been since inserted in its proper place.

The same year were printed *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, a tragedy written in imitation of the ancients, and never designed by the author for the stage. These poems were published by another bookfeller. It has been asked, whether Simmons was discouraged from receiving them by the slow sale of the former? Why a writer changed his bookfeller a hundred years ago, I am far from hoping to discover. It is certain, that he who in two years sells thirteen hundred copies of a volume in quarto, bought for two payments of five pounds each, has no reason to repent his purchase.

When Milton shewed *Paradise Regained* to Elwood, "This," said he, "is owing to you; for you put it in my head by the  
"question

“ question you put to me at Chalfont, which  
“ otherwise I had not thought of.”

His last poetical offspring was his favourite. He could not, as Elwood relates, endure to hear *Paradise Lost* preferred to *Paradise Regained*. Many causes may vitiate a writer's judgement of his own works. On that which has cost him much labour he sets a high value, because he is unwilling to think that he has been diligent in vain; what has been produced without toilsome efforts is considered with delight, as a proof of vigorous faculties and fertile invention; and the last work, whatever it be, has necessarily most of the grace of novelty. Milton, however it happened, had this prejudice, and had it to himself.

To that multiplicity of attainments, and extent of comprehension, that entitle this great author to our veneration, may be added a kind of humble dignity, which did not disdain the meanest services to literature. The epick poet, the controvertist, the politician, having already descended to accommodate children with a book of rudiments,  
now,



now, in the last years of his life, composed a book of Logick, for the initiation of students in philosophy: and published (1672) *Artis Logicæ plenior Institutio ad Petri Rami methodum concinnata*; that is, "A new Scheme of  
 " Logick, according to the Method of Ramus." I know not whether, even in this book, he did not intend an act of hostility against the Universities; for Ramus was one of the first oppugners of the old philosophy, who disturbed with innovations the quiet of the schools.

His polemical disposition again revived. He had now been safe so long, that he forgot his fears, and published a *Treatise of true Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and the best Means to prevent the Growth of Popery*.

But this little tract is modestly written, with respectful mention of the Church of England, and an appeal to the thirty-nine articles. His principle of toleration is, agreement in the sufficiency of the Scriptures; and he extends it to all who, whatever their opinions are, profess to derive them from the sacred books. The papists appeal to other

testimonies, and are therefore in his opinion not to be permitted the liberty of either publick or private worship; for though they plead conscience, *we have no warrant*, he says, *to regard conscience which is not grounded in Scripture.*

Those who are not convinced by his reasons, may be perhaps delighted with his wit. The term *Roman catholick* is, he says, *one of the Pope's bulls; it is particular universal, or catholick schismatick.*

He has, however, something better. As the best preservative against Popery, he recommends the diligent perusal of the Scriptures; a duty, from which he warns the busy part of mankind not to think themselves excused.

He now reprinted his juvenile poems, with some additions.

In the last year of his life he sent to the press, seeming to take delight in publication, a collection of Familiar Epistles in Latin; to which, being too few to make a volume, he  
added

added some academical exercises, which perhaps he perused with pleasure, as they recalled to his memory the days of youth; but for which nothing but veneration for his name could now procure a reader.

When he had attained his sixty-sixth year, the gout, with which he had been long tormented, prevailed over the enfeebled powers of nature. He died by a quiet and silent expiration, about the tenth of November 1674, at his house in Bunhill-fields; and was buried next his father in the chancel of St. Giles at Cripplegate. His funeral was very splendidly and numerously attended.

Upon his grave there is supposed to have been no memorial; but in our time a monument has been erected in Westminster-Abbey *To the Author of Paradise Lost*, by Mr. Benson, who has in the inscription bestowed more words upon himself than upon Milton.

When the inscription for the monument of Philips, in which he was said to be *soli Miltono secundus*, was exhibited to Dr. Sprat, then dean of Westminster, he refused to ad-

mit it; the name of Milton was, in his opinion, too detestable to be read on the wall of a building dedicated to devotion. Atterbury, who succeeded him, being author of the inscription, permitted its reception. "And such has been the change of publick opinion," said Dr. Gregory, from whom I heard this account, "that I have seen erected in the church a statue of that man, whose name I once knew considered as a pollution of its walls."

Milton has the reputation of having been in his youth eminently beautiful, so as to have been called the Lady of his college. His hair, which was of a light brown, parted at the foretop, and hung down upon his shoulders, according to the picture which he has given of Adam. He was, however, not of the heroick stature, but rather below the middle size, according to Mr. Richardson, who mentions him as having narrowly escaped from being *short and thick*. He was vigorous and active, and delighted in the exercise of the sword, in which he is related to have been eminently skilful. His weapon was, I believe, not the rapier, but the backsword,  
of

of which he recommends the use in his book on Education.

His eyes are said never to have been bright; but, if he was a dexterous fencer, they must have been once quick.

His domestick habits, so far as they are known, were those of a severe student. He drank little strong drink of any kind, and fed without delicacy of choice or excess in quantity. In his youth he studied late at night; but afterwards changed his hours, and rested in bed from nine to four in the Summer, and five in Winter. The course of his day was best known after he was blind. When he first rose, he heard a chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and then studied till twelve; then took some exercise for an hour; then dined; then played on the organ, and sung, or heard another sing; then studied to fix; then entertained his visitors, till eight; then supped, and, after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water, went to bed.

So is his life described; but this even tenour appears attainable only in Colleges.

He that lives in the world will sometimes have the succession of his practice broken and confused. Visitors, of whom Milton is represented to have had great numbers, will come and stay unseasonably; business, of which every man has some, must be done when others will do it.

When he did not care to rise early, he had something read to him by his bedside; perhaps at this time his daughters were employed. He composed much in the morning, and dictated in the day, sitting obliquely in an elbow-chair, with his leg thrown over the arm.

Fortune appears not to have had much of his care. In the civil wars he lent his personal estate to the parliament; but when, after the contest was decided, he solicited repayment, he met not only with neglect, but *sharp rebuke*; and, having tired both himself and his friends, was given up to poverty and hopeless indignation, till he shewed how able he was to do greater service. He was then made Latin secretary, with two hundred pounds a year; and had a thousand pounds  
for

for his *Defence of the People*. His widow, who, after his death, retired to Namptwich in Cheshire, and died about 1729, is said to have reported that he lost two thousand pounds by entrusting it to a scrivener; and that, in the general depredation upon the Church, he had grasped an estate of about sixty pounds a year belonging to Westminster-Abbey, which, like other sharers of the plunder of rebellion, he was afterwards obliged to return. Two thousand pounds, which he had placed in the Excise-office, were also lost. There is yet no reason to believe that he was ever reduced to indigence. His wants, being few, were competently supplied. He sold his library before his death, and left his family fifteen hundred pounds, on which his widow laid hold, and only gave one hundred to each of his daughters.

His literature was unquestionably great. He read all the languages which are considered either as learned or polite; Hebrew, with its two dialects, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish. In Latin his skill was such as places him in the first rank of writers and criticks; and he appears to have culti-

vated Italian with uncommon diligence. The books in which his daughter, who used to read to him, represented him as most delighting, after Homer, which he could almost repeat, were Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Euripides. His Euripides is, by Mr. Cradock's kindness, now in my hands: the margin is sometimes noted; but I have found nothing remarkable.

Of the English poets he set most value upon Spenser, Shakspeare, and Cowley. Spenser was apparently his favourite: Shakspeare he may easily be supposed to like, with every other skilful reader; but I should not have expected that Cowley, whose ideas of excellence were so different from his own, would have had much of his approbation. His character of Dryden, who sometimes visited him, was, that he was a good rhymist, but no poet.

His theological opinions are said to have been first Calvinistical; and afterwards, perhaps when he began to hate the Presbyterians, to have tended towards Arminianism. In the mixed questions of theology and government,



vernment, he never thinks that he can recede far enough from popery, or prelacy; but what Baudius says of Erasmus seems applicable to him, *magis habuit quod fugeret, quam quod sequeretur*. He had determined rather what to condemn, than what to approve. He has not associated himself with any denomination of Protestants: we know rather what he was not, than what he was. He was not of the church of Rome; he was not of the church of England.

To be of no church, is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by Faith and Hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and reimpresed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example. Milton, who appears to have had full conviction of the truth of Christianity, and to have regarded the Holy Scriptures with the profoundest veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occasional agency of Providence, yet grew old without any visible wor-

ship. In the distribution of his hours, there was no hour of prayer, either solitary, or with his household ; omitting publick prayers, he omitted all.

Of this omission the reason has been sought, upon a supposition which ought never to be made, that men live with their own approbation, and justify their conduct to themselves. Prayer certainly was not thought superfluous by him, who represents our first parents as praying acceptably in the state of innocence, and efficaciously after their fall. That he lived without prayer can hardly be affirmed ; his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer. The neglect of it in his family was probably a fault for which he condemned himself, and which he intended to correct, but that death, as too often happens, intercepted his reformation.

His political notions were those of an acrimonious and furly republican, for which it is not known that he gave any better reason than that *a popular government was the most frugal ; for the trappings of a monarchy would set up an ordinary commonwealth.* It is surely  
very

very shallow policy, that supposes money to be the chief good; and even this, without considering that the support and expence of a Court is, for the most part, only a particular kind of traffick, by which money is circulated, without any national impoverishment.

Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a fullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of controul, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the state, and prelates in the church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected, that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.

It has been observed, that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character, in domestick relations, is, that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females,

females, as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought woman made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion.

Of his family some account may be expected. His sister, first married to Mr. Phillips, afterwards married Mr. Agar, a friend of her first husband, who succeeded him in the Crown-office. She had by her first husband Edward and John, the two nephews whom Milton educated; and by her second, two daughters.

His brother, Sir Christopher, had two daughters, Mary and Catherine, and a son Thomas, who succeeded Agar in the Crown-office, and left a daughter living in 1749 in Grosvenor-street.

Milton had children only by his first wife; Anne, Mary, and Deborah. Anne, though deformed, married a master-builder, and died of her first child. Mary died single. Deborah married Abraham Clark, a weaver in Spital-fields,

fields, and lived seventy-six years, to August 1727. This is the daughter of whom public mention has been made. She could repeat the first lines of Homer, the Metamorphoses, and some of Euripides, by having often read them. Yet here incredulity is ready to make a stand. Many repetitions are necessary to fix in the memory lines not understood; and why should Milton wish or want to hear them so often! These lines were at the beginning of the poems. Of a book written in a language not understood, the beginning raises no more attention than the end; and as those that understand it know commonly the beginning best, its rehearsal will seldom be necessary. It is not likely that Milton required any passage to be so much repeated as that his daughter could learn it; nor likely that he desired the initial lines to be read at all; nor that the daughter, weary of the drudgery of pronouncing unideal sounds, would voluntarily commit them to memory.

To this gentlewoman Addison made a present, and promised some establishment; but died soon after. Queen Caroline sent her  
fifty

fifty guineas. She had seven sons and three daughters; but none of them had any children, except her son Caleb and her daughter Elizabeth. Caleb went to Fort St. George in the East Indies, and had two sons, of whom nothing is now known. Elizabeth married Thomas Foster, a weaver in Spital-fields, and had seven children, who all died. She kept a petty grocer's or chandler's shop, first at Halloway, and afterwards in Cock-lane near Shoreditch Church. She knew little of her grandfather, and that little was not good. She told of his harshness to his daughters, and his refusal to have them taught to write; and, in opposition to other accounts, represented him as delicate, though temperate, in his diet.

In 1750, April 5, *Comus* was played for her benefit. She had so little acquaintance with diversion or gaiety, that she did not know what was intended when a benefit was offered her. The profits of the night were only one hundred and thirty pounds, though Dr. Newton brought a large contribution; and twenty pounds were given by Tonson, a man who is to be praised as often as he is named.

named. Of this sum one hundred pounds was placed in the stocks, after some debate between her and her husband in whose name it should be entered; and the rest augmented their little stock, with which they removed to Iflington. "This was the greatest benefaction that *Paradise Lost* ever procured the author's descendents; and to this he who has now attempted to relate his Life, had the honour of contributing a Prologue.

IN

IN the examination of Milton's poetical works, I shall pay so much regard to time as to begin with his juvenile productions. For his early pieces he seems to have had a degree of fondness not very laudable : what he has once written he resolves to preserve, and gives to the publick an unfinished poem, which he broke off because he was *nothing satisfied with what he had done*, supposing his readers less nice than himself. These preludes to his future labours are in Italian, Latin, and English. Of the Italian I cannot pretend to speak as a critic ; but I have heard them commended by a man well qualified to decide their merit. The Latin pieces are lusciously elegant ; but the delight which they afford is rather by the exquisite imitation of the ancient writers, by the purity of the diction, and the harmony of the numbers, than by any power of invention, or vigour of sentiment. They are not all of equal value ; the elegies excell the odes ; and some of the exercises on Gunpowder Treason might have been spared.

The



The English poems, though they make no promises of *Paradise Lost*, have this evidence of genius, that they have a cast original and unborrowed. But their peculiarity is not excellence: if they differ from the verses of others, they differ for the worse; for they are too often distinguished by repulsive harshness; the combinations of words are new, but they are not pleasing; the rhymes and epithets seem to be laboriously sought, and violently applied.

That in the early part of his life he wrote with much care appears from his manuscripts, happily preserved at Cambridge, in which many of his smaller works are found as they were first written, with the subsequent corrections. Such reliques shew how excellence is acquired; what we hope ever to do with ease, we may learn first to do with diligence.

Good  
remark

Those who admire the beauties of this great poet, sometimes force their own judgement into false approbation of his little pieces, and prevail upon themselves to think  
that

that admirable which is only singular. All that short compositions can commonly attain is neatness and elegance. Milton never learned the art of doing little things with grace; he overlooked the milder excellence of suavity and softness; he was a *Lion* that had no skill in *dandling the Kid*.

One of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed is *Lycidas*; of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing. What beauty there is, we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Mincius, nor tells of rough *satyrs* and *sauns with cloven heels*. Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief.

In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting: whatever images it can supply, are long ago exhausted;

hausted; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey that they studied together, it is easy to suppose how much he must miss the companion of his labours, and the partner of his discoveries; but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines?

We drove a field, and both together heard  
 What time the grey fly winds her sultry horn,  
 Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night.

We know that they never drove a field, and that they had no flocks to batten; and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true meaning is so uncertain and remote, that it is never sought, because it cannot be known when it is found.

Among the flocks, and copses, and flowers, appear the heathen deities; Jove and Phœbus, Neptune and Æolus, with a long train of mythological imagery, such as a College easily supplies. Nothing can less display knowledge, or less exercise invention, than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone, without any

judge of his skill in piping; and how one god asks another god what is become of *Lycidas*, and how neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no sympathy; he who thus praises will confer no honour.

This poem has yet a grosser fault. With these trifling fictions are mingled the most awful and sacred truths, such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverend combinations. The shepherd likewise is now a feeder of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendent of a Christian flock. Such equivocations are always unskilful; but here they are indecent, and at least approach to impiety, of which, however, I believe the writer not to have been conscious.

Such is the power of reputation justly acquired, that its blaze drives away the eye from nice examination. Surely no man could have fancied that he read *Lycidas* with pleasure, had he not known its author.

Of the two pieces, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, I believe opinion is uniform; every man that reads them, reads them with pleasure.

... The

The author's design is not, what Theobald has remarked, merely to shew how objects derive their colours from the mind, by representing the operation of the same things upon the gay and the melancholy temper, or upon the same man as he is differently disposed; but rather how, among the successive variety of appearances, every disposition of mind takes hold on those by which it may be gratified.

The *cheerful* man hears the lark in the morning; the *pensive* man hears the nightingale in the evening. The *cheerful* man sees the cock strut, and hears the horn and hounds echo in the wood; then walks *not unseen* to observe the glory of the rising sun, or listen to the singing milk-maid, and view the labours of the plowman and the mower; then casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty, and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant; thus he pursues rural gaiety through a day of labour or of play, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance.

The *pensive* man, at one time, walks *unseen* to muse at midnight; and at another hears the fullen curfew. If the weather drives him home, he sits in a room lighted only by *glowing embers*; or by a lonely lamp outwatches the North Star, to discover the habitation of separate souls, and varies the shades of meditation; by contemplating the magnificent or pathetick scenes of tragick and epic poetry. When the morning comes, a morning gloomy with rain and wind, he walks into the dark trackless woods, falls asleep by some murmuring water, and with melancholy enthusiasm expects some dream of prognostication, or some musick played by aerial performers.

Both Mirth and Melancholy are solitary, silent inhabitants of the breast that neither receive nor transmit communication; no mention is therefore made of a philosophical friend, or a pleasant companion. Seriousness does not arise from any participation of calamity, nor gaiety from the pleasures of the bottle.

The man of *chearfulness*, having exhausted the country, tries what *towered cities* will afford,

afford, and mingles with scenes of splendor, gay assemblies, and nuptial festivities; but he mingles a mere spectator, as, when the learned comedies of Jonson, or the wild dramas of Shakspeare, are exhibited, he attends the theatre.

The *penfive* man never loses himself in crowds, but walks the cloister, or frequents the cathedral. Milton probably had not yet forsaken the Church.

Both his characters delight in musick; but he seems to think that chearful notes would have obtained from Pluto a compleat dismissal of Eurydice, of whom solemn sounds only procured a conditional release.

For the old age of Chearfulness he makes no provision; but Melancholy he conducts with great dignity to the close of life.

Through these two poems the images are properly selected, and nicely distinguished; but the colours of the diction seem not sufficiently discriminated. His Chearfulness is without levity, and his Pensiveness without

asperity. I know not whether the characters are kept sufficiently apart. No mirth can, indeed, be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth. They are two noble efforts of imagination.

The greatest of his juvenile performances is the *Mask of Comus*; in which may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of *Paradise Lost*. Milton appears to have formed very early that system of diction, and mode of verse, which his maturer judgement approved; and from which he never endeavoured nor desired to deviate.

Nor does *Comus* afford only a specimen of his language; it exhibits likewise his power of description, and his vigour of sentiment, employed in the praise and defence of virtue. A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and descriptive epithets, embellish almost every period with lavish decoration. As a series of lines, therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it,



As a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A Masque, in those parts where supernatural intervention is admitted, must indeed be given up to all the freaks of imagination; but, so far as the action is merely human, it ought to be reasonable, which can hardly be said of the conduct of the two brothers; who, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries too far to find their way back, and leave a helpless Lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. This however is a defect overbalanced by its convenience.

What deserves more reprehension is, that the prologue spoken in the wild wood by the attendant Spirit is addressed to the audience; a mode of communication so contrary to the nature of dramatique representation, that no precedents can support it.

The discourse of the Spirit is too long; an objection that may be made to almost all the following speeches: they have not the spriteliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal

contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed, and formally repeated, on a moral question. The auditor therefore listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety.

The song of Comus has airiness and jollity; but, what may recommend Milton's morals as well as his poetry, the invitations to pleasure are so general, that they excite no distinct images of corrupt enjoyment, and take no dangerous hold on the fancy,

The following soliloquies of Comus and the Lady are elegant, but tedious. The song must owe much to the voice, if it ever can delight. At last the Brothers enter, with too much tranquillity; and when they have feared lest their sister should be in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger, the Elder makes a speech in praise of chastity, and the Younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher.

Then descends the Spirit in form of a shepherd; and the Brother, instead of being in haste to ask his help, praises his singing,

and enquires his business in that place. It is remarkable, that at this interview the Brother is taken with a short fit of rhyming. The Spirit relates that the Lady is in the power of Comus; the Brother moralises again; and the Spirit makes a long narration, of no use because it is false, and therefore unsuitable to a good Being.

In all these parts the language is poetical, and the sentiments are generous; but there is something wanting to allure attention.

The dispute between the Lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the drama, and wants nothing but a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies, to invite attention, and detain it.

The songs are vigorous, and full of imagery; but they are harsh in their diction, and not very musical in their numbers.

Throughout the whole, the figures are too bold, and the language too luxuriant for dialogue. It is a drama in the epic style, incredibly splendid, and tediously instructive.

The

The *Sonnets* were written in different parts of Milton's life, upon different occasions. They deserve not any particular criticism; for of the best it can only be said, that they are not bad; and perhaps only the eighth and the twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation. The fabrick of a sonnet, however adapted to the Italian language, has never succeeded in ours, which, having greater variety of termination, requires the rhymes to be often changed.

Those little pieces may be dispatched without much anxiety; a greater work calls for greater care. I am now to examine *Paradise Lost*; a poem, which, considered with respect to design, may claim the first place, and with respect to performance the second, among the productions of the human mind.

What  
forms  
a  
Poetical  
genius

By the general consent of critics, the first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epick poem, as it requires an assemblage of all the powers which are singly sufficient for other compositions. Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason. Epick poetry undertakes

undertakes to teach the most important truths by the most pleasing precepts, and therefore relates some great event in the most affecting manner. History must supply the writer with the rudiments of narration, which he must improve and exalt by a nobler art, animate by dramattick energy, and diversify by retrospection and anticipation; morality must teach him the exact bounds, and different shades, of vice and virtue: from policy, and the practice of life, he has to learn the discriminations of character, and the tendency of the passions, either single or combined; and physiology must supply him with illustrations and images. To put these materials to poetical use, is required an imagination capable of painting nature, and realizing fiction. Nor is he yet a poet till he has attained the whole extension of his language, distinguished all the delicacies of phrase, and all the colours of words, and learned to adjust their different sounds to all the varieties of metrical modulation.

Bossu is of opinion that the poet's first work is to find a *moral*, which his fable is afterwards to illustrate and establish. This  
seems

seems to have been the process only of Milton; the moral of other poems is incidental and consequent; in Milton's only it is essential and intrinsic. His purpose was the most useful and the most arduous; *to vindicate the ways of God to man*; to shew the reasonableness of religion, and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law.

To convey this moral, there must be a *fable*, a narration artfully constructed, so as to excite curiosity, and surprise expectation. In this part of his work, Milton must be confessed to have equalled every other poet. He has involved in his account of the Fall of Man the events which preceded, and those that were to follow it: he has interwoven the whole system of theology with such propriety, that every part appears to be necessary; and scarcely any recital is wished shorter for the sake of quickening the progress of the main action.

The subject of an epick poem is naturally an event of great importance. That of Milton is not the destruction of a city, the conduct of a colony, or the foundation of an empire.

empire. His subject is the fate of worlds, the revolutions of heaven and of earth; rebellion against the Supreme King, raised by the highest order of created beings; the overthrow of their host, and the punishment of their crime; the creation of a new race of reasonable creatures; their original happiness and innocence, their forfeiture of immortality, and their restoration to hope and peace.

Great events can be hastened or retarded only by persons of elevated dignity. Before the greatness displayed in Milton's poem, all other greatness shrinks away. The weakest of his agents are the highest and noblest of human beings, the original parents of mankind; with whose actions the elements consented; on whose rectitude, or deviation of will, depended the state of terrestrial nature, and the condition of all the future inhabitants of the globe.

Of the other agents in the poem, the chief are such as it is irreverence to name on slight occasions. The rest were lower powers;

—of

—of which the least could wield

Those elements, and arm him with the force  
Of all their regions;

powers, which only the controul of Omnipotence restrains from laying creation waste, and filling the vast expanse of space with ruin and confusion. To display the motives and actions of beings thus superiour, so far as human reason can examine them, or human imagination represent them, is the task which this mighty poet has undertaken and performed.

In the examination of epick poems much speculation is commonly employed upon the *characters*. The characters in the *Paradise Lost*, which admit of examination, are those of angels and of man; of angels good and evil; of man in his innocent and sinful state.

Among the angels, the virtue of Raphael is mild and placid, of easy condescension and free communication; that of Michael is regal and lofty, and, as may seem, attentive to the dignity of his own nature. Abdiel and Gabriel appear occasionally, and act as every incident



cident requires ; the solitary fidelity of Abdiel is very amiably painted.

Of the evil angels the characters are more diversified. To Satan, as Addison observes, such sentiments are given as suit *the most exalted and most depraved being*. Milton has been censured, by Clarke, for the impiety which sometimes breaks from Satan's mouth. For there are thoughts, as he justly remarks, which no observation of character can justify, because no good man would willingly permit them to pass, however transiently, through his own mind. To make Satan speak as a rebel, without any such expressions as might taint the reader's imagination, was indeed one of the great difficulties in Milton's undertaking, and I cannot but think that he has extricated himself with great happiness. There is in Satan's speeches little that can give pain to a pious ear. The language of rebellion cannot be the same with that of obedience. The malignity of Satan foams in haughtiness and obstinacy ; but his expressions are commonly general, and no otherwise offensive than as they are wicked.

The other chiefs of the celestial rebellion are very judiciously discriminated in the first and second books; and the ferocious character of Moloch appears, both in the battle and the council, with exact consistency.

To Adam and to Eve are given, during their innocence, such sentiments as innocence can generate and utter. Their love is pure benevolence and mutual veneration; their repasts are without luxury, and their diligence without toil. Their addresses to their Maker have little more than the voice of admiration and gratitude. Fruition left them nothing to ask, and Innocence left them nothing to fear.

But with guilt enter distrust and discord, mutual accusation, and stubborn self-defence; they regard each other with alienated minds, and dread their Creator as the avenger of their transgression. At last they seek shelter in his mercy, soften to repentance, and melt in supplication. Both before and after the  
Fall,

Fall, the superiority of Adam is diligently sustained.

Of the *probable* and the *marvellous*, two parts of a vulgar epick poem, which immerge the critick in deep consideration, the *Paradise Lost* requires little to be said. It contains the history of a miracle, of Creation and Redemption; it displays the power and the mercy of the Supreme Being; the probable therefore is marvellous, and the marvellous is probable. The substance of the narrative is truth; and as truth allows no choice, it is, like necessity, superior to rule. To the accidental or adventitious parts, as to every thing human, some slight exceptions may be made. But the main fabrick is immovably supported.

It is justly remarked by Addison, that this poem has, by the nature of its subject, the advantage above all others, that it is universally and perpetually interesting. All mankind will, through all ages, bear the same relation to Adam and to Eve, and must partake of that good and evil which extend to themselves.

Of the *machinery*, so called from Θεός ἀπὸ μηχανῆς, by which is meant the occasional interposition of supernatural power, another fertile topick of critical remarks, here is no room to speak, because every thing is done under the immediate and visible direction of Heaven; but the rule is so far observed, that no part of the action could have been accomplished by any other means.

Of *episodes*, I think there are only two, contained in Raphael's relation of the war in heaven, and Michael's prophetick account of the changes to happen in this world. Both are closely connected with the great action; one was necessary to Adam as a warning, the other as a consolation.

To the compleatness or *integrity* of the design nothing can be objected; it has distinctly and clearly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end. There is perhaps no poem, of the same length, from which so little can be taken without apparent mutilation. Here are no funeral games, nor is there any long description of a shield.

shield. The short digressions at the beginning of the third, seventh, and ninth books, might doubtless be spared; but superfluitie, so beautiful, who would take away? or who does not wish that the author of the *Iliad* had gratified succeeding ages with a little knowledge of himself? Perhaps no passages are more frequently or more attentively read than those extrinsick paragraphs; and, since the end of poetry is pleasure, that cannot be unpoetical with which all are pleased.

The questions, whether the action of the poem be strictly *one*, whether the poem can be properly termed *heroick*, and who is the hero, are raised by such readers as draw their principles of judgement rather from books than from reason. Milton, though he intitled *Paradise Lost* only a *poem*, yet calls it himself *heroick song*. Dryden, petulantly and indecently, denies the heroism of Adam, because he was overcome; but there is no reason why the hero should not be unfortunate, except established practice, since success and virtue do not go necessarily together. Cato is the hero of Lucan; but Lucan's authority will not be suffered by Quintilian to

decide. However, if success be necessary, Adam's deceiver was at last crushed; Adam was restored to his Maker's favour, and therefore may securely resume his human rank.

After the scheme and fabrick of the poem, must be considered its component parts, the sentiments and the diction.

The *sentiments*, as expressive of manners, or appropriated to characters, are, for the greater part, unexceptionably just.

Splendid passages, containing lessons of morality, or precepts of prudence, occur seldom. Such is the original formation of this poem, that as it admits no human manners till the Fall, it can give little assistance to human conduct. Its end is to raise the thoughts above sublunary cares or pleasures. Yet the praise of that fortitude, with which Abdiel maintained his singularity of virtue against the scorn of multitudes, may be accommodated to all times; and Raphael's reproof of Adam's curiosity after the planetary motions, with the answer returned by Adam, may

may be confidently opposed to any rule of life which any poet has delivered.

The thoughts which are occasionally called forth in the progress, are such as could only be produced by an imagination in the highest degree fervid and active, to which materials were supplied by incessant study and unlimited curiosity. The heat of Milton's mind might be said to sublimate his learning, to throw off into his work the spirit of science, unmingled with its grosser parts.

He had considered creation in its whole extent, and his descriptions are therefore learned. He had accustomed his imagination to unrestrained indulgence, and his conceptions therefore were extensive. The characteristic quality of his poem is sublimity. He sometimes descends to the elegant, but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural port is gigantick loftiness\*. He can please when pleasure is required; but it is his peculiar power to astonish.

\* Algarotti terms it *gigantesca sublimità Miltoniana*.

He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that Nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others; the power of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful: he therefore chose a subject on which too much could not be said, on which he might tire his fancy without the censure of extravagance,

The appearances of nature, and the occurrences of life, did not satiate his appetite of greatness. To paint things as they are, requires a minute attention, and employs the memory rather than the fancy. Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility; reality was a scene too narrow for his mind. He sent his faculties out upon discovery, into worlds where only imagination can travel, and delighted to form new modes of existence, and furnish sentiment and action to superior beings, to trace the counsels of hell, or accompany the choirs of heaven,

But



But he could not be always in other worlds: he must sometimes revisit earth, and tell of things visible and known. When he cannot raise wonder by the sublimity of his mind, he gives delight by its fertility.

Whatever be his subject, he never fails to fill the imagination. But his images and descriptions of the scenes or operations of Nature do not seem to be always copied from original form, nor to have the freshness, raciness, and energy of immediate observation. He saw Nature, as Dryden expresses it, *through the spectacles of books*; and on most occasions calls learning to his assistance. The garden of Eden brings to his mind the vale of *Enna*, where Proserpine was gathering flowers. Satan makes his way through fighting elements, like *Argo* between the *Cyanean* rocks, or *Ulysses* between the two *Sicilian* whirlpools, when he shunned *Charybdis* on the *larboard*. The mythological allusions have been justly censured, as not being always used with notice of their vanity; but they contribute variety to the narration, and produce an alternate exercise of the memory and the fancy.

His families are less numerous, and more various, than those of his predecessors. But he does not confine himself within the limits of rigorous comparison: his great excellence is amplitude, and he expands the adventitious image beyond the dimensions which the occasion required. Thus, comparing the shield of Satan to the orb of the Moon, he crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope, and all the wonders which the telescope discovers.

Of his moral sentiments it is hardly praise to affirm that they excel those of all other poets; for this superiority he was indebted to his acquaintance with the sacred writings. The ancient epick poets, wanting the light of Revelation, were very unskilful teachers of virtue: their principal characters may be great, but they are not amiable. The reader may rise from their works with a greater degree of active or passive fortitude, and sometimes of prudence; but he will be able to carry away few precepts of justice, and none of mercy.

From

From the Italian writers it appears, that the advantages of even Christian knowledge may be possessed in vain. Ariosto's pravity is generally known; and though the *Deliverance of Jerusalem* may be considered as a sacred subject, the poet has been very sparing of moral instruction.

In Milton every line breathes sanctity of thought, and purity of manners, except when the train of the narration requires the introduction of the rebellious spirits; and even they are compelled to acknowledge their subjection to God, in such a manner as excites reverence, and confirms piety.

Of human beings there are but two; but those two are the parents of mankind, venerable before their fall for dignity and innocence, and amiable after it for repentance and submission. In their first state their affection is tender without weakness, and their piety sublime without presumption. When they have sinned, they shew how discord begins in natural frailty, and how it ought to cease in mutual forbearance; how confidence  
of

of the divine favour is forfeited by sin, and how hope of pardon may be obtained by penitence and prayer. A state of innocence we can only conceive, if indeed, in our present misery, it be possible to conceive it; but the sentiments and worship proper to a fallen and offending being, we have all to learn, as we have all to practise.

The poet, whatever be done, is always great. Our progenitors, in their first state, conversed with angels; even when folly and sin had degraded them, they had not in their humiliation *the port of mean suitors*; and they rise again to reverential regard, when we find that their prayers were heard.

As human passions did not enter the world before the Fall, there is in the *Paradise Lost* little opportunity for the pathetick; but what little there is has not been lost. That passion which is peculiar to rational nature, the anguish arising from the consciousness of transgression, and the horrors attending the sense of the Divine Displeasure, are very justly described and forcibly impressed. But the passions are moved only on one occasion; sublimity

raity is the general and prevailing quality in this poem; sublimity variously modified, sometimes descriptive, sometimes argumentative.

The defects and faults of *Paradise Lost*, for faults and defects every work of man must have, it is the business of impartial criticism to discover. As, in displaying the excellence of Milton, I have not made long quotations, because of selecting beauties there had been no end, I shall in the same general manner mention that which seems to deserve censure; for what Englishman can take delight in transcribing passages, which, if they lessen the reputation of Milton, diminish in some degree the honour of our country?

The generality of my scheme does not admit the frequent notice of verbal inaccuracies; which Bentley, perhaps better skilled in grammar than in poetry, has often found, though he sometimes made them, and which he imputed to the obtrusions of a reviser whom the author's blindness obliged him to employ. A supposition rash and groundless, if he thought it true; and vile and pernicious,

cious, if, as is said, he in private allowed it to be false.

The plan of *Paradise Lost* has this inconvenience, that it comprises neither human actions nor human manners. The man and woman who act and suffer, are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no transaction in which he can be engaged; beholds no condition in which he can by any effort of imagination place himself; he has, therefore, little natural curiosity or sympathy.

We all, indeed, feel the effects of Adam's disobedience; we all sin like Adam, and like him must all bewail our offences; we have restless and insidious enemies in the fallen angels, and in the blessed spirits we have guardians and friends; in the Redemption of mankind we hope to be included: and in the description of heaven and hell we are surely interested, as we are all to reside hereafter either in the regions of horror or of bliss.

But these truths are too important to be new; they have been taught to our infancy; they

they have mingled with our solitary thoughts and familiar conversation, and are habitually interwoven with the whole texture of life. Being therefore not new, they raise no unaccustomed emotion in the mind; what we knew before, we cannot learn; what is not unexpected, cannot surprize.

Of the ideas suggested by these awful scenes, from some we recede with reverence, except when stated hours require their association; and from others we shrink with horror, or admit them only as salutary afflictions, as counterpoises to our interests and passions. Such images rather obstruct the career of fancy than incite it.

Pleasure and terrour are indeed the genuine sources of poetry; but poetical pleasure must be such as human imagination can at least conceive, and poetical terrour such as human strength and fortitude may combat. The good and evil of Eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit; the mind sinks under them in passive helplessness, content with calm belief and humble adoration.

Known truths, however, may take a different appearance, and be conveyed to the mind by a new train of intermediate images. This Milton has undertaken, and performed with pregnancy and vigour of mind peculiar to himself. Whoever considers the few radical positions which the Scriptures afforded him, will wonder by what energetick operation he expanded them to such extent, and ramified them to so much variety, restrained as he was by religious reverence from licentiousness of fiction.

Here is a full display of the united force of study and genius ; of a great accumulation of materials, with judgement to digest, and fancy to combine them : Milton was able to select from nature, or from story, from ancient fable, or from modern science, whatever could illustrate or adorn his thoughts. An accumulation of knowledge impregnated his mind, fermented by study, and sublimed by imagination.

It has been therefore said, without an indecent hyperbole, by one of his encomiasts,  
that



that in reading *Paradise Lost* we read a book of universal knowledge.

But original deficiency cannot be supplied. The want of human interest is always felt. *Paradise Lost* is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harrassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation; we desert our master, and seek for companions. *Very true*

Another inconvenience of Milton's design is, that it requires the description of what cannot be described, the agency of spirits. He saw that immateriality supplied no images, and that he could not show angels acting but by instruments of action; he therefore invested them with form and matter. This, being necessary, was therefore defensible; and he should have secured the consistency of his system, by keeping immateriality out of sight, and enticing his reader to drop it from his thoughts. But he has unhappily perplexed his poetry with his philosophy. His infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure

pure spirit, and sometimes animated body. When Satan walks with his lance upon the *burning marle*, he has a body; when, in his passage between hell and the new world, he is in danger of sinking in the vacuity, and is supported by a gust of rising vapours, he has a body; when he animates the toad, he seems to be mere spirit, that can penetrate matter at pleasure; when he *starts up in his own shape*, he has at least a determined form; and when he is brought before Gabriel, he has *a spear and a shield*, which he had the power of hiding in the toad, though the arms of the contending angels are evidently material.

The vulgar inhabitants of Pandæmonium, being *incorporeal spirits*, are *at large, though without number*, in a limited space; yet in the battle, when they were overwhelmed by mountains, their armour hurt them, *crushed in upon their substance, now grown gross by sinning*. This likewise happened to the uncorrupted angels, who were overthrown *the sooner for their arms, for unarmed they might easily as spirits have evaded by contraction, or remove*. Even as spirits they are hardly spiritual; for *contraction and remove* are  
images

images of matter; but if they could have escaped without their armour, they might have escaped from it, and left only the empty cover to be battered. Uriel, when he rides on a sun-beam, is material; Satan is material when he is afraid of the prowess of Adam.

The confusion of spirit and matter which pervades the whole narration of the war of heaven fills it with incongruity; and the book, in which it is related, is, I believe, the favourite of children, and gradually neglected as knowledge is increased.

After the operation of immaterial agents, which cannot be explained, may be considered that of allegorical persons, which have no real existence. To exalt causes into agents, to invest abstract ideas with form, and animate them with activity, has always been the right of poetry. But such airy beings are, for the most part, suffered only to do their natural office, and retire. Thus Fame tells a tale, and Victory hovers over a general, or perches on a standard; but Fame and Victory can do no more. To give them any

real employment, or ascribe to them any material agency, is to make them allegorical no longer, but to shock the mind by ascribing effects to non-entity. In the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, we see *Violence* and *Strength*, and in the *Alceſtis* of Euripides, we see *Death*, brought upon the stage, all as active persons of the drama; but no precedents can justify absurdity.

Milton's allegory of Sin and Death is undoubtedly faulty. Sin is indeed the mother of Death, and may be allowed to be the portress of hell; but when they stop the journey of Satan, a journey described as real, and when Death offers him battle, the allegory is broken. That Sin and Death should have shewn the way to hell, might have been allowed; but they cannot facilitate the passage by building a bridge, because the difficulty of Satan's passage is described as real and sensible, and the bridge ought to be only figurative. The hell assigned to the rebellious spirits is described as not less local than the residence of man. It is placed in some distant part of space, separated from the regions of harmony and order by a chaotick waste and an unoccupied

cupied vacuity ; but *Sin* and *Death* worked up a *mole* of aggregated *soil*, cemented with *asphaltus* ; a work too bulky for ideal architects.

This unskilful allegory appears to me one of the greatest faults of the poem ; and to this there was no temptation, but the author's opinion of its beauty.

To the conduct of the narrative some objections may be made. Satan is with great expectation brought before Gabriel in Paradise, and is suffered to go away unmolested. The creation of man is represented as the consequence of the vacuity left in heaven by the expulsion of the rebels ; yet Satan mentions it as a report *rise in heaven* before his departure.

To find sentiments for the state of innocence, was very difficult ; and something of anticipation perhaps is now and then discovered. Adam's discourse of dreams seems not to be the speculation of a new-created being. I know not whether his answer to the angel's reproof for curiosity does not want something of propriety : it is the speech of a

man acquainted with many other men. Some philosophical notions, especially when the philosophy is false, might have been better omitted. The angel, in a comparison, speaks of *timorous deer*, before deer were yet timorous, and before Adam could understand the comparison.

Dryden remarks, that Milton has some flats among his elevations. This is only to say, that all the parts are not equal. In every work, one part must be for the sake of others; a palace must have passages; a poem must have transitions. It is no more to be required that wit should always be blazing, than that the sun should always stand at noon. In a great work there is a vicissitude of luminous and opaque parts, as there is in the world a succession of day and night. Milton, when he has expatiated in the sky, may be allowed sometimes to revisit earth; for what other author ever soared so high, or sustained his flight so long?

Milton, being well versed in the Italian poets, appears to have borrowed often from them; and, as every man learns something from his companions, his desire of imitating

ing Ariosto's levity has disgraced his work with the *Paradise of Fools* ; a fiction not in itself ill-imagined, but too ludicrous for its place.

His play on words, in which he delights too often ; his equivocations, which Bentley endeavours to defend by the example of the ancients ; his unnecessary and ungraceful use of terms of art ; it is not necessary to mention, because they are easily remarked, and generally censured, and at last bear so little proportion to the whole, that they scarcely deserve the attention of a critick.

Such are the faults of that wonderful performance *Paradise Lost* ; which he who can put in balance with its beauties must be considered not as nice but as dull, as less to be censured for want of candour, than pitied for want of sensibility.

Of *Paradise Regained*, the general judgement seems now to be right, that it is in many parts elegant, and every-where instructive. It was not to be supposed that the writer of *Paradise Lost* could ever write without

great effusions of fancy, and exalted precepts of wisdom. The basis of *Paradise Regained* is narrow; a dialogue without action can never please like an union of the narrative and dramatick powers. Had this poem been written not by Milton, but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise.

If *Paradise Regained* has been too much depreciated, *Sampson Agonistes* has in requital been too much admired. It could only be by long prejudice, and the bigotry of learning, that Milton could prefer the ancient tragedies, with their encumbrance of a chorus, to the exhibitions of the French and English stages; and it is only by a blind confidence in the reputation of Milton, that a drama can be praised in which the intermediate parts have neither cause nor consequence, neither hasten nor retard the catastrophe.

In this tragedy are however many particular beauties, many just sentiments and striking lines; but it wants that power of attracting the attention which a well connected plan produces.

Milton



Milton would not have excelled in dramatic writing ; he knew human nature only in the gross, and had never studied the shades of character, nor the combinations of concurring, or the perplexity of contending passions. He had read much, and knew what books could teach ; but had mingled little in the world, and was deficient in the knowledge which experience must confer.

Through all his greater works there prevails an uniform peculiarity of *Diction*, a mode and cast of expression which bears little resemblance to that of any former writer, and which is so far removed from common use, that an unlearned reader, when he first opens his book, finds himself surpris'd by a new language.

This novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words suitable to the grandeur of his ideas. *Our language*, says Addison, *sunk under him*. But the truth is, that, both in prose and verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantick

S 4

principle.

principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned; for there judgment operates freely, neither softened by the beauty, nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but such is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without resistance, the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and a nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration.

Milton's style was not modified by his subject: what is shown with greater extent in *Paradise Lost*, may be found in *Comus*. One source of his peculiarity was his familiarity with the Tuscan poets: the disposition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian; perhaps sometimes combined with other tongues. Of him, at last, may be said what Jonson says of Spenser, that *he wrote no language*, but has formed what *Butler* calls a *Babylonish Dialect*, in itself harsh and barbarous, but made by exalted genius, and extensive learning, the vehicle of so much instruction and so much pleasure, that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity.

What-

Whatever be the faults of his diction, he cannot want the praise of copiousness and variety: he was master of his language in its full extent; and has selected the melodious words with such diligence, that from his book alone the Art of English Poetry might be learned.

After his diction, something must be said of his *versification*. *The measure*, he says, *is the English heroick verse without rhyme*. Of this mode he had many examples among the Italians, and some in his own country. The Earl of Surry is said to have translated one of Virgil's books without rhyme; and, besides our tragedies, a few short poems had appeared in blank verse; particularly one tending to reconcile the nation to Raleigh's wild attempt upon Guiana, and probably written by Raleigh himself. These petty performances cannot be supposed to have much influenced Milton, who more probably took his hint from Trifino's *Italia Liberata*; and, finding blank verse easier than rhyme, was desirous of persuading himself that it is better,

*Rhyme,*

*Rhyme*, he says, and says truly, *is no necessary adjunct of true poetry*. But perhaps, of poetry as a mental operation, metre or musick is no necessary adjunct: it is however by the musick of metre that poetry has been discriminated in all languages; and in languages melodiously constructed, by a due proportion of long and short syllables, metre is sufficient. But one language cannot communicate its rules to another: where metre is scanty and imperfect, some help is necessary. The musick of the English heroick line strikes the ear so faintly that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line co-operate together: this co-operation can be only obtained by the preservation of every verse unmingled with another, as a distinct system of sounds; and this distinctness is obtained and preserved by the artifice of rhyme. The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer; and there are only a few skilful and happy readers of Milton, who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin. *Blank verse,*

*true  
summary*

*verse*, said an ingenious critick, *seems to be verse only to the eye.*

Poetry may subsist without rhyme, but English poetry will not often please; nor can rhyme ever be safely spared but where the subject is able to support itself. Blank verse makes some approach to that which is called the *lapidary style*; has neither the easiness of prose, nor the melody of numbers, and therefore tires by long continuance. Of the Italian writers without rhyme, whom Milton alleges as precedents, not one is popular; what reason could urge in its defence, has been confuted by the ear.

But, whatever be the advantage of rhyme, I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymers; for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is; yet, like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himself capable of astonishing, may write blank verse; but those that hope only to please, must condescend to rhyme.

The highest praise of genius is original invention. Milton cannot be said to have  
con-

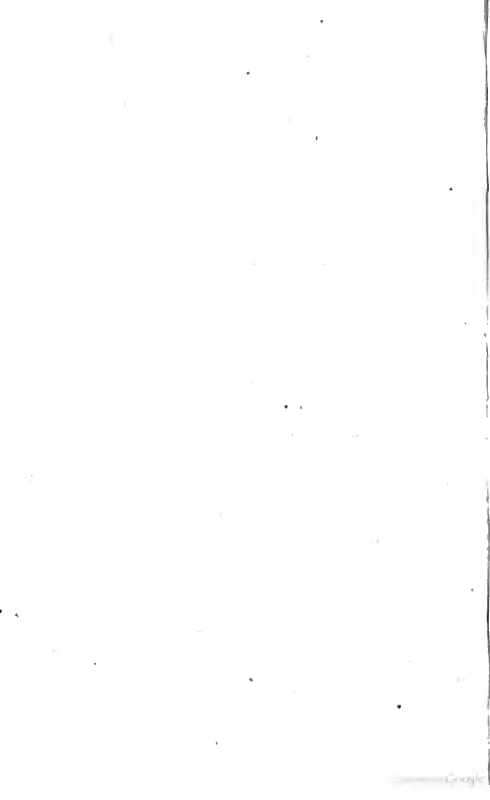
contrived the structure of an epick poem, and therefore must yield to that vigour and amplitude of mind to which all generations must be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable, the variation of incidents, the interposition or dialogue, and all the stratagems that surprize and enchain attention. But, of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the least indebted. He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance: he did not refuse admission to the thoughts or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them. From his contemporaries he neither courted nor received support; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified, or favour gained; no exchange of praise, \*nor solicitation of support. His great works were performed under discountenance, and in blindness, but difficulties vanished at his touch; he was born for whatever is arduous; and his work is not the greatest of heroick poems, only because it is not the first.

BUTLER.

---

B U T L E R.

---





---

---

## B U T L E R.

**O**F the great author of *Hudibras* there is a life prefixed to the later editions of his poem, by an unknown writer, and therefore of disputable authority ; and some account is incidentally given by Wood, who confesses the uncertainty of his own narrative ; more however than they knew cannot now be learned, and nothing remains but to compare and copy them.

**SAMUEL BUTLER** was born in the parish of Strensham in Worcestershire ; according to his biographer, in 1612 ; but Mr. Longueville, the son of Butler's principal friend, informed the author of the " *General Dictionary*" that he was born in 1600.

His

His father's condition is variously represented. Wood mentions him as competently wealthy ; but the other says he was an honest farmer with some small estate, who made a shift to educate his son at the grammar school of Worcester, under Mr. Henry Bright, from whose care he removed for a short time to Cambridge ; but, for want of money, was never made a member of any college. Wood leaves us rather doubtful whether he went to Cambridge or Oxford ; but at last makes him pass six or seven years at Cambridge, without knowing in what hall or college : yet it can hardly be imagined that he lived so long in either university, but as belonging to one house or another ; and it is still less likely that he could have so long inhabited a place of learning with so little distinction as to leave his residence uncertain.

Wood has his information from his brother, whose narrative placed him at Cambridge, in opposition to that of his neighbours which sent him to Oxford. The brother's seems the best authority, till, by confessing his  
I inability

inability to tell his hall or college, he gives reason to suspect that he was resolved to bestow on him an academical education; but durst not name a college, for fear of detection.

He was for some time, according to the author of his Life, clerk to Mr. Jefferys of Earl's-Croom in Worcesterfhire, an eminent justice of the peace. In his service he had not only leisure for study, but for recreation: his amusements were musick and painting; and the reward of his pencil was the friendship of the celebrated Cooper.

He was afterwards admitted into the family of the Countess of Kent, where he had the use of a library; and so much recommended himself to Selden, that he was often employed by him in literary business. Selden, as is well known, was steward to the Countess, and is supposed to have gained much of his wealth by managing her estate.

In what character Butler was admitted into that Lady's service, how long he continued in it, and why he left it, is, like

the other incidents of his life, utterly unknown.

The vicissitudes of his condition placed him afterwards in the family of Sir Samuel Luke, one of Cromwell's officers. Here he observed so much of the character of the sectaries, that he is said to have written or begun his poem at this time; and it is likely that such a design would be formed in a place where he saw the principles and practices of the rebels, audacious and undisguised in the confidence of success.

At length the King returned, and the time came in which loyalty hoped for its reward. Butler, however, was only made secretary to the Earl of Carbury, president of the principality of Wales; who conferred on him the stewardship of Ludlow Castle, when the Court of the Marches was revived.

In this part of his life, he married Mrs. Herbert, a gentlewoman of a good family; and lived, says Wood, upon her fortune, having studied the common law, but never  
4 practised

practised it. A fortune she had, says his biographer, but it was lost by bad securities.

In 1663 was published the first part, containing three cantos, of the poem of *Hudibras*, which, as Prior relates, was made known at Court by the taste and influence of the Earl of Dorset. When it was known, it was necessarily admired: the King quoted, the courtiers studied, and the whole party of the royalists applauded it. Every eye watched for the golden shower which was to fall upon the author, who certainly was not without his part in the general expectation.

In 1664 the second part appeared; the curiosity of the nation was rekindled, and the writer was again praised and elated. But praise was his whole reward. Clarendon, says Wood, gave him reason to hope for "places and employments of value and credit;" but no such advantages did he ever obtain. It is reported, that the King once gave him three hundred guineas; but of this temporary bounty I find no proof.

Wood relates that he was secretary to Villiers Duke of Buckingham, when he was Chancellor of Cambridge: this is doubted by the other writer, who yet allows the Duke to have been his frequent benefactor. That both these accounts are false there is reason to suspect, from a story told by Packe, in his account of the Life of Wycherley, and from some verses which Mr. Thyer has published in the author's remains.

“ Mr. Wycherley,” says Packe, “ had always laid hold of an opportunity which offered of representing to the Duke of Buckingham how well Mr. Butler had deserved of the royal family, by writing his inimitable Hudibras; and that it was a reproach to the Court, that a person of his loyalty and wit should suffer in obscurity, and under the wants he did. The Duke always seemed to hearken to him with attention enough; and, after some time, undertook to recommend his pretensions to his Majesty. Mr. Wycherley, in hopes to keep him steady to his word, obtained of his Grace to name a day, when he might

2

“ intro-

“ introduce that modest and unfortunate poet  
 “ to his new patron. At last an appoint-  
 “ ment was made, and the place of meeting  
 “ was agreed to be the Roebuck. Mr. But-  
 “ ler and his friend attended accordingly :  
 “ the Duke joined them ; but, as the d---l  
 “ would have it, the door of the room where  
 “ they sat was open, and his Grace, who  
 “ had seated himself near it, observing a  
 “ pimp of his acquaintance (the creature too  
 “ was a knight) trip by with a brace of La-  
 “ dies, immediately quitted his engagement,  
 “ to follow another kind of business, at  
 “ which he was more ready than in doing  
 “ good offices to men of desert ; though no  
 “ one was better qualified than he, both in  
 “ regard to his fortune and understanding, to  
 “ protect them ; and, from that time to the  
 “ day of his death, poor Butler never found  
 “ the least effect of his promise !”

Such is the story. The verses are written  
 with a degree of acrimony, such as neglect  
 and disappointment might naturally excite ;  
 and such as it would be hard to imagine But-  
 ler capable of expressing against a man who  
 had any claim to his gratitude.

Notwithstanding this discouragement and neglect, he still prosecuted his design; and in 1678 published the third part, which still leaves the poem imperfect and abrupt. How much more he originally intended, or with what events the action was to be concluded, it is vain to conjecture. Nor can it be thought strange that he should stop here, however unexpectedly. To write without reward is sufficiently unpleasing; and, if his birth be placed right by Mr. Longueville, he had now arrived at an age when he might well think it proper to be in jest no longer.

He died in 1680; and Mr. Longueville, having unsuccessfully solicited a subscription for his interment in Westminster Abbey, buried him at his own cost in the churchyard of Covent Garden. Dr. Simon Patrick read the service.

About sixty years afterwards, Mr. Barber, a printer, Mayor of London, and a friend to Mr. Butler's principles, bestowed on him a monument in Westminster Abbey, thus inscribed: .

M. S.



M. S.

SAMUELIS BUTLERI,  
 Qui *Strenshamiae* in agro *Vigorn.* nat. 1612,  
 obiit *Land.* 1680.

Vir doctus imprimis, acer, integer;  
 Operibus Ingenii, non item præmiis, fœlix:  
*Satyrici* apud nos Carminis Artifex egregius;  
 Quo simulatæ Religionis Larvam detraxit,  
 Et Perduellium scelera liberrime exagitavit:  
 Scriptorum in suo genere, Primus et Postremus.  
 Ne, cui vivo deerant ferè omnia,  
 Deesset etiam mortuo Tumulus,  
 Hoc tandem posito marmore, curavit  
 JOHANNES BARBER, Civis *Londinensis*, 1721.

After his death were published three small volumes of his posthumous works: I know not by whom collected, or by what authority ascertained; and, lately, two volumes more have been printed by Mr. Thyer of Manchester, indubitably genuine. From none of these pieces can his life be traced, or his character discovered. Some verses, in the last collection, shew him to have been among those who ridiculed the institution of the Royal Society, of which the enemies were for some time very numerous and very acrimonious, for what reason it is hard to conceive, since

the philosophers professed not to advance doctrines, but to produce facts; and the most zealous enemy of innovation must admit the gradual progress of experience, however he may oppose hypothetical temerity.

In this mist of obscurity passed the life of Butler, a man whose name can only perish with his language. The date of his birth is doubtful; the mode and place of his education are unknown; the events of his life are variously related; and all that can be told with certainty is, that he was poor.

---

THE poem of Hudibras is one of those compositions of which a nation may justly boast; as the images which it exhibits are domestick, the sentiments unborrowed and unexpected, and the strain of diction original and peculiar. We must not, however, suffer the pride, which we assume as the countrymen of Butler, to make any encroachment upon justice, nor appropriate those honours which others have a right to share. The poem

poem of Hudibras is not wholly English; the original idea is to be found in the History of Don Quixote; a book to which a mind of the greatest powers may be indebted without disgrace.

Cervantes shews a man, who having, by the incessant perusal of incredible tales, subjected his understanding to his imagination, and familiarised his mind by pertinacious meditation to think of incredible events and scenes of impossible existence, goes out in the pride of knighthood, to redress wrongs, and defend virgins, to rescue captive princesses, and tumble usurpers from their thrones; attended by a squire, whose cunning, too low for the suspicion of a generous mind, enables him often to cheat his master.

The hero of Butler is a Presbyterian Justice, who, in the confidence of legal authority, and the rage of zealous ignorance, ranges the country to repress superstition and correct abuses, accompanied by an Independent Clerk, disputatious and obstinate, with whom he often debates, but never conquers him.

Cervantes

Cervantes had so much kindness for Don Quixote, that, however he embarrasses him with absurd distresses, he gives him so much sense and virtue as may preserve our esteem : wherever he is, or whatever he does, he is made by matchless dexterity commonly ridiculous, but never contemptible.

But for poor Hudibras, his poet had no tenderness : he chuses not that any pity should be shewn or respect paid him : he gives him up at once to laughter and contempt, without any quality that can dignify or protect him.

In forming the character of Hudibras, and describing his person and habiliments, the author seems to labour with a tumultuous confusion of dissimilar ideas. He had read the history of the mock knights-errant ; he knew the notions and manners of a presbyterian magistrate, and tried to unite the absurdities of both, however distant, in one personage. Thus he gives him that pedantick ostentation of knowledge which has no relation to chivalry, and loads him with martial

tial encumbrances that can add nothing to his civil dignity. He sends him out *a colonelling*, and yet never brings him within sight of war.

If Hudibras be considered as the representative of the presbyterians, it is not easy to say why his weapons should be represented as ridiculous or useless; for, whatever judgement might be passed upon their knowledge or their arguments, experience had sufficiently shown that their swords were not to be despised.

The hero, thus compounded of swaggerer and pedant, of knight and justice, is led forth to action, with his squire Ralpho, an Independent enthusiast.

Of the contexture of events planned by the author, which is called the action of the poem, since it is left imperfect, no judgement can be made. It is probable, that the hero was to be led through many luckless adventures, which would give occasion, like his attack upon the *bear and fiddle*, to expose the ridiculous rigour of the sectaries; like his encounter with Sidrophel and Whacum,

to

to make superstition and credulity contemptible; or, like his recourse to the low retailer of the law, discover the fraudulent practices of different professions.

What series of events he would have formed, or in what manner he would have rewarded or punished his hero, it is now vain to conjecture. His work must have had, as it seems, the defect which Dryden imputes to Spenser; the action could not have been one; there could only have been a succession of incidents, each of which might have happened without the rest, and which could not all co-operate to any single conclusion.

The discontinuity of the action might however have been easily forgiven, if there had been action enough; but I believe every reader regrets the paucity of events, and complains that in the poem of Hudibras, as in the history of Thucydides, there is more said than done. The scenes are too seldom changed, and the attention is tired with long conversation.

It

*Just  
remarks*

It is indeed much more easy to form dialogues than to contrive adventures. Every position makes way for an argument, and every objection dictates an answer. When two disputants are engaged upon a complicated and extensive question, the difficulty is not to continue, but to end the controversy. But whether it be that we comprehend but few of the possibilities of life, or that life itself affords little variety, every man who has tried knows how much labour it will cost to form such a combination of circumstances, as shall have at once the grace of novelty and credibility, and delight fancy without violence to reason.

Perhaps the dialogue of this poem is not perfect. Some power of engaging the attention might have been added to it, by quicker reciprocation, by seasonable interruptions, by sudden questions, and by a nearer approach to dramatick spriteliness; without which, fictitious speeches will always tire, however sparkling with sentences, and however variegated with allusions.

The

The great source of pleasure is variety. Uniformity must tire at last, though it be uniformity of excellence. We love to expect; and, when expectation is disappointed or gratified, we want to be again expecting. For this impatience of the present, whoever would please, must make provision. The skilful writer *irritat, mulcet*, makes a due distribution of the still and animated parts. It is for want of this artful intertexture, and those necessary changes, that the whole of a book may be tedious, though all the parts are praised.

If unexhaustible wit could give perpetual pleasure, no eye would ever leave half-read the work of Butler; for what poet has ever brought so many remote images so happily together? It is scarcely possible to peruse a page without finding some association of images that was never found before. By the first paragraph the reader is amused, by the next he is delighted, and by a few more strained to astonishment; but astonishment is a toilsome pleasure: he is soon weary of wondering, and longs to be diverted.

Omnia



*Omnia vult belle Matho dicere, dic aliquando  
Et bene, dic neutrum, dic aliquando male.*

Imagination is ufelefs without knowledge : nature gives in vain the power of combination, unlefs study and obfervation fupply materials to be combined. Butler's treasures of knowledge appear proportioned to his expence : whatever topick employs his mind, he fhews himfelf qualified to expand and illuftrate it with all the accelfories that books can furnifh : he is found not only to have travelled the beaten road, but the bye-paths of literature ; not only to have taken general furveys, but to have examined particulars with minute infpection.

If the French boast the learning of Rabelais, we need not be afraid of confronting them with Butler.

But the moft valuable parts of his performance are thofe which retired ftudy and native wit cannot fupply. He that merely makes a book from books may be ufeful, but can fcarcely be great. Butler had not fuffered life to glide befide him unfeen or unobferved.

observed. He had watched with great diligence the operations of human nature, and traced the effects of opinion, humour, interest, and passion. From such remarks proceeded that great number of sententious distichs which have passed into conversation, and are added as proverbial axioms to the general stock of practical knowledge.

When any work has been viewed and admired, the first question of intelligent curiosity is, how was it performed? Hudibras was not a hasty effusion; it was not produced by a sudden tumult of imagination, or a short paroxysm of violent labour. To accumulate such a mass of sentiments at the call of accidental desire, or of sudden necessity, is beyond the reach and power of the most active and comprehensive mind. I am informed by Mr. Thyer of Manchester, the excellent editor of this author's reliques, that he could shew something like Hudibras in prose. He has in his possession the common-place book, in which Butler repositied, not such events or precepts as are gathered by reading; but such remarks, similitudes, allusions, assemblages, or inferences, as occasion prompted, or meditation

tation produced; those thoughts that were generated in his own mind, and might be usefully applied to some future purpose. Such is the labour of those who write for immortality.

But human works are not easily found without a perishable part. Of the ancient poets every reader feels the mythology tedious and oppressive. Of *Hudibras*, the manners, being founded on opinions, are temporary and local, and therefore become every day less intelligible, and less striking. What Cicero says of philosophy is true likewise of wit and humour, that "time effaces the fictions of opinion, and confirms the determinations of Nature." Such manners as depend upon standing relations and general passions are co-extended with the race of man; but those modifications of life, and peculiarities of practice, which are the progeny of error and perverseness, or at best of some accidental influence or transient persuasion, must perish with their parents.

Much therefore of that humour which transported the last century with merriment

is lost to us, who do not know the four solemnity, the sullen superstition, the gloomy moroseness, and the stubborn scruples of the ancient Puritans; or, if we knew them, derive our information only from books, or from tradition, have never had them before our eyes, and cannot but by recollection and study understand the lines in which they are satirised. Our grandfathers knew the picture from the life; we judge of the life by contemplating the picture.

It is scarcely possible, in the regularity and composure of the present time, to image the tumult of absurdity, and clamour of contradiction, that perplexed doctrine, and disturbed both publick and private quiet, in that age, when subordination was broken, and awe was hissed away; when any unsettled innovator who could hatch a half-formed notion produced it to the publick; when every man might become a preacher, and almost every preacher could collect a congregation.

The wisdom of the nation is very reasonably supposed to reside in the parliament. What can be concluded of the lower classes  
of

of the people, when in one of the parliaments summoned by Cromwell it was seriously proposed, that all the records in the Tower should be burnt, that all memory of things past should be effaced, and that the whole system of life should commence anew ?

We have never been witnesses of animosities excited by the use of minced pies and plumb porridge ; nor seen with what abhorrence those who could eat them at all other times of the year would shrink from them in December. An old Puritan, who was alive in my childhood, being at one of the feasts of the church invited by a neighbour to partake his cheer, told him, that, if he would treat him at an alehouse with beer, brewed for all times and seasons, he should accept his kindness, but would have none of his superstitious meats or drinks.

One of the puritanical tenets was the illegality of all games of chance ; and he that reads Gataker upon *Lots*, may see how much learning and reason one of the first scholars of his age thought necessary, to prove that

it was no crime to throw a die, or play at cards, or to hide a shilling for the reckoning.

Astrology, however, against which so much of this satire is directed, was not more the folly of the Puritans than of others. It had in that time a very extensive dominion. Its predictions raised hopes and fears in minds which ought to have rejected it with contempt. In hazardous undertakings, care was taken to begin under the influence of a propitious planet; and when the king was prisoner in Carisbrook Castle, an astrologer was consulted what hour would be found most favourable to an escape.

What effect this poem had upon the publick, whether it shamed imposture or reclaimed credulity, is not easily determined. Cheats can seldom stand long against laughter. It is certain that the credit of planetary intelligence wore fast away; though some men of knowledge, and Dryden among them, continued to believe that conjunctions and oppositions had a great part in the distribution of good or evil, and in the government of sublunary things.

Poetical Action ought to be probable upon certain suppositions, and such probability as burlesque requires is here violated only by one incident. Nothing can shew more plainly the necessity of doing something, and the difficulty of finding something to do, than that Butler was reduced to transfer to his hero the flagellation of Sancho, not the most agreeable fiction of Cervantes; very suitable indeed to the manners of that age and nation, which ascribed wonderful efficacy to voluntary penances; but so remote from the practice and opinions of the Hudibrastick time, that judgement and imagination are alike offended,

The diction of this poem is grossly familiar, and the numbers purposely neglected, except in a few places where the thoughts by their native excellence secure themselves from violation, being such as mean language cannot express. The mode of versification has been blamed by Dryden, who regrets that the heroick measure was not rather chosen. To the critical sentence of Dryden the highest reverence would be due, were not his deci-

sions often precipitate, and his opinions immature. When he wished to change the measure, he probably would have been willing to change more. If he intended that, when the numbers were heroick, the diction should still remain vulgar, he planned a very heterogeneous and unnatural composition. If he preferred a general stateliness both of sound and words, he can be only understood to wish that Butler had undertaken a different work.

The measure is quick, spritely, and colloquial, suitable to the vulgarity of the words and the levity of the sentiments. But such numbers and such diction can gain regard only when they are used by a writer whose vigour of fancy and copiousness of knowledge entitle him to contempt of ornaments, and who, in confidence of the novelty and justness of his conceptions, can afford to throw metaphors and epithets away. To another that conveys common thoughts in careless versification, it will only be said, "Pauper videri Cinna vult, & est pauper." The meaning and diction will be worthy of each other,



other, and criticism may justly doom them to perish together.

Nor, even though another Butler should arise, would another Hudibras obtain the same regard. Burlesque consists in a disproportion between the style and the sentiments, or between the adventitious sentiments and the fundamental subject. It therefore, like all bodies compounded of heterogeneous parts, contains in it a principle of corruption. All disproportion is unnatural; and from what is unnatural we can derive only the pleasure which novelty produces. We admire it awhile as a strange thing; but, when it is no longer strange, we perceive its deformity. It is a kind of artifice, which by frequent repetition detects itself; and the reader, learning in time what he is to expect, lays down his book, as the spectator turns away from a second exhibition of those tricks, of which the only use is to shew that they can be played.

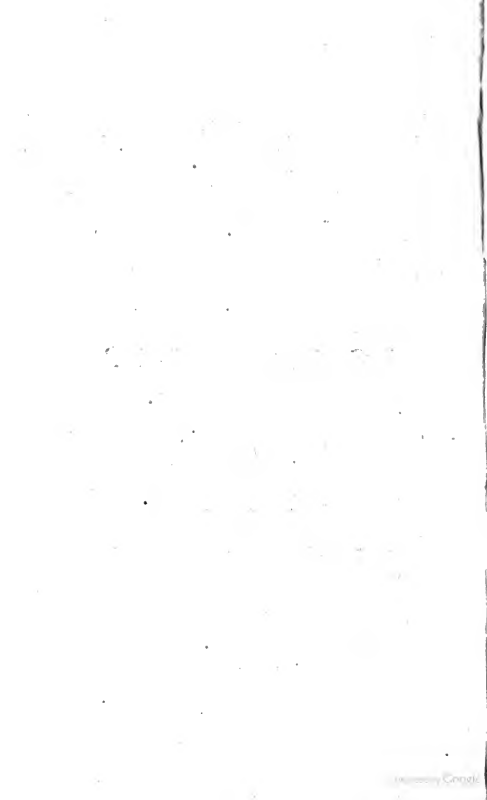
*Curious  
and of  
what  
interest  
the  
burlesque*



---

ROCHESTER.

---



---

---

## ROCHESTER.

**J**OHN WILMOT, afterwards Earl of Rochester, the son of Henry Earl of Rochester, better known by the title of Lord Wilmot, so often mentioned in Clarendon's History, was born April 10, 1647, at Ditchley in Oxfordshire. After a grammatical education at the school of Burford, he entered a nobleman into Wadham College in 1659, only twelve years old; and in 1661, at fourteen, was, with some other persons of high rank, made master of arts by Lord Clarendon in person.

He travelled afterwards into France and Italy; and, at his return, devoted himself to a Court. In 1665 he went to sea with Sandwich, and distinguished himself at Bergen  
by

by uncommon intrepidity; and the next summer served again on board Sir Edward Spragge, who, in the heat of the engagement, having a message of reproof to send to one of his captains, could find no man ready to carry it but Wilmot, who, in an open boat, went and returned amidst the storm of shot.

But his reputation for bravery was not lasting: he was reproached with flinching away in street quarrels, and leaving his companions to shift as they could without him; and Sheffield Duke of Buckingham has left a story of his refusal to fight him.

He had very early an inclination to intemperance, which he totally subdued in his travels; but, when he became a courtier, he unhappily addicted himself to dissolute and vitious company, by which his principles were corrupted, and his manners depraved. He lost all sense of religious restraint; and, finding it not convenient to admit the authority of laws which he was resolved not to obey, sheltered his wickedness behind infidelity.

As

As he excelled in that noisy and licentious merriment which wine incites, his companions eagerly encouraged him in excess, and he willingly indulged it; till, as he confessed to Dr. Burnet, he was for five years together continually drunk, or so much inflamed by frequent ebriety, as in no interval to be master of himself.

In this state he played many frolicks, which it is not for his honour that we should remember, and which are not now distinctly known. He often pursued low amours in mean disguises, and always acted with great exactness and dexterity the characters which he assumed.

He once erected a stage on Tower-hill, and harangued the populace as a mountebank; and, having made physick part of his study, is said to have practised it successfully.

He was so much in favour with King Charles, that he was made one of the gentlemen of the bedchamber, and comptroller of Woodstock Park.

Having

Having an active and inquisitive mind, he never, except in his paroxysms of intemperance, was wholly negligent of study: he read what is considered as polite learning so much, that he is mentioned by Wood as the greatest scholar of all the nobility. Sometimes he retired into the country, and amused himself with writing libels, in which he did not pretend to confine himself to truth.

His favourite author in French was Boileau, and in English Cowley.

Thus in a course of drunken gaiety, and gross sensuality, with intervals of study perhaps yet more criminal, with an avowed contempt of all decency and order, a total disregard to every moral, and a resolute denial of every religious obligation, he lived worthless and useless, and blazed out his youth and his health in lavish voluptuousness; till, at the age of one and thirty, he had exhausted the fund of life, and reduced himself to a state of weakness and decay.



At this time he was led to an acquaintance with Dr. Burnet, to whom he laid open with great freedom the tenour of his opinions, and the course of his life, and from whom he received such conviction of the reasonableness of moral duty, and the truth of Christianity, as produced a total change both of his manners and opinions. The account of those salutary conferences is given by Burnet, in a book intituled, *Some Passages of the Life and Death of John Earl of Rochester*; which the critick ought to read for its elegance, the philosopher for its arguments, and the saint for its piety. It were an injury to the reader to offer him an abridgement.

He died July 26, 1680, before he had completed his thirty-third year; and was so worn away by a long illness, that life went out without a struggle.

Lord Rochester was eminent for the vigour of his colloquial wit, and remarkable for many wild prauks and fallies of extravagance. The glare of his general character diffused itself upon his writings; the compositions of  
a man

a man whose name was heard so often, were certain of attention, and from many readers certain of applause. This blaze of reputation is not yet quite extinguished; and his poetry still retains some splendour beyond that which genius has bestowed.

Wood and Burnet give us reason to believe, that much was imputed to him which he did not write. I know not by whom the original collection was made, or by what authority its genuineness was ascertained. The first edition was published in the year of his death, with an air of concealment, professing in the title-page to be printed at *Antwerp*.

Of some of the pieces, however, there is no doubt. The Imitation of Horace's Satire, the Verses to Lord Mulgrave, the Satire against Man, the Verses upon *Nothing*, and perhaps some others, are I believe genuine, and perhaps most of those which the late collection exhibits.

As he cannot be supposed to have found leisure for any course of continued study, his pieces are commonly short, such as one fit of resolution would produce.

His

His songs have no particular character: they tell, like other songs, in smooth and easy language, of scorn and kindness, dismissal and desertion, absence and inconstancy, with the common places of artificial courtship. They are commonly smooth and easy; but have little nature, and little sentiment.

His imitation of Horace on Lucilius is not inelegant or unhappy. In the reign of Charles the Second began that adaptation, which has since been very frequent, of ancient poetry to present times; and perhaps few will be found where the parallelism is better preserved than in this. The versification is indeed sometimes careless, but it is sometimes vigorous and weighty.

The strongest effort of his Muse is his poem upon *Nothing*. He is not the first who has chosen this barren topick for the boast of his fertility. There is a poem called *Nil* in Latin by *Passerat*, a poet and critick of the sixteenth century in France; who, in his own epitaph, expresses his zeal for good poetry thus:

—Molliter offa quiescent  
Sint modo carminibus non onerata malis.

His works are not common, and therefore  
I shall subjoin his verses.

In examining this performance, *Nothing* must be considered as having not only a negative but a kind of positive signification; as, I need not fear thieves, I have *nothing*; and *nothing* is a very powerful protector. In the first part of the sentence it is taken negatively; in the second it is taken positively, as an agent. In one of Boileau's lines it was a question, whether he should use *à rien faire*, or *à ne rien faire*; and the first was preferred, because it gave *rien* a sense in some sort positive. *Nothing* can be a subject only in its positive sense, and such a sense is given it in the first line:

*Nothing*, thou elder brother ev'n to shade.

In this line, I know not whether he does not allude to a curious book *de Umbra*, by Woverus, which, having told the qualities of *Shade*, concludes with a poem in which are these lines:

Jam

Jam primum terram validis circumspice claustris  
 Suspensam totam, decus admirabile mundi  
 Terrasque tractusque maris, camposque liquentes  
 Aeris, & vasti laqueata palatia cœli—  
 Omnibus UMBRA prior.

The positive sense is generally preserved, with great skill, through the whole poem; though sometimes, in a subordinate sense, the negative *nothing* is injudiciously mingled. Passerat confounds the two senses.

Another of his most vigorous pieces is his Lampoon on Sir Car Scroop, who, in a poem called *The Praise of Satire*, had some lines like these \* :

He who can push into a midnight fray  
 His brave companion, and then run away,  
 Leaving him to be murder'd in the street,  
 Then put it off with some buffoon conceit;  
 Him, thus dishonour'd, for a wit you own,  
 And court him as top fidler of the town.

This was meant of Rochester, and drew from him those furious verses; to which

\* I quote from memory.

Scroop made in reply an epigram, ending with these lines :

Thou canst hurt no man's fame with thy ill word ;  
Thy pen is full as harmless as thy sword.

Of the satire against *Man*, Rochester can only claim what remains when all Boileau's part is taken away.

In all his works there is sprightliness and vigour, and every where may be found tokens of a mind which study might have carried to excellence ; and what more can be expected from a life spent in ostentatious contempt of regularity, and ended before the abilities of many other men began to be displayed ?

Poema Cl. V. JOANNIS PASSERATII,  
Regii in Academia Parisiensi Professoris.

Ad ornatissimum virum ERRICUM MEMMIUM.

Janus adest, festæ poscunt sua dona Kalendæ,  
Munus abest festis quod possim offerre Kalendis.  
Siccine Castalius nobis exaruit humor?  
Usque adeò ingenii nostri est exhausta facultas,  
Immunem ut videat redeuntis janitor anni?  
Quod nusquam est, potius nova per vestigia quæram.

Ecce autem partes dum sese versat in omnes  
Invenit mea Musa NIHIL, ne despice inunus.  
Nam NIHIL est gemmis, NIHIL est pretiosius auro.  
Huc animum, huc igitur vultus adverte benignos:  
Res nova narratur quæ nulli audita priorum,  
Ausonii & Graii dixerunt cætera vates,  
Ausoniæ indictum NIHIL est Græcæque Camœnæ.

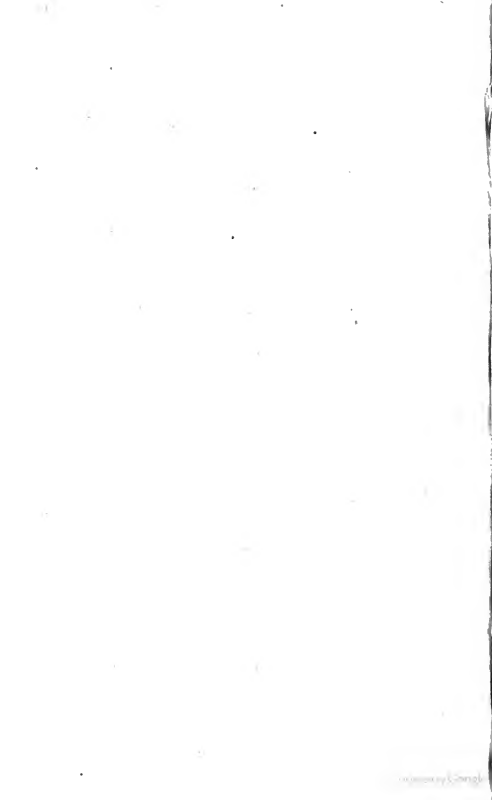
E cœlo quacunque Ceres sua prospicit arva,  
Aut genitor liquidis orbem complectitur ulnis  
Océanus, NIHIL interitus & originis expers.  
Immortale NIHIL, NIHIL omni parte beatum.  
Quòd si hinc majestas & vis divina probatur,  
Num quid honore deum, num quid dignabimur  
aris?

Conspectu lucis NIHIL est jucundius almæ,  
Vere NIHIL, NIHIL irriguo formosus horto,  
Floridius pratis, Zephyri clementius aura;  
In bello sanctum NIHIL est, Martisque tumultu;  
Justum in pace NIHIL, NIHIL est in fœdere tutum.

Felix cui NIHIL est, (fuerant hæc vota Tibullo)  
 Non timet infidias : fures, incendia temnit :  
 Sollicitas sequitur nullo sub iudice lites.  
 Ille ipse invictis qui subjicit omnia fati  
 Zenonis sapiens, NIHIL admiratur & optat.  
 Socraticique gregis fuit ista scientia quondam,  
 Scire NIHIL, studio cui nunc incumbitur uni.  
 Nec quicquam in ludo mavult didicisse juvenus,  
 Ad magnas quia ducit opes, & culmen honorum.  
 Nosce NIHIL, nosces fertur quod Pythagoreæ  
 Grano hærec fabæ, cui vox adjuncta negantis.  
 Multi Mercurio freti duce viscera terræ  
 Pura liquefaciunt simul, & patrimonia miscent,  
 Arcano instantes operi, & carbonibus atris,  
 Qui tandem exhausti damnis, fractique labore,  
 Inveniunt atque inventum NIHIL usque requirunt.  
 Hoc dimetiri non ulla decempeda possit :  
 Nec numeret Libycæ numerum qui callet arenæ :  
 Et Phœbo ignotum NIHIL est, NIHIL altius astris.  
 Tūque, tibi licet eximium sit mentis acumen,  
 Omnem in naturam penetrans, & in abdita rerum,  
 Pace tua, Memmi, NIHIL ignorare vidēris.  
 Sole tamen NIHIL est, & puro clarius igne.  
 Tange NIHIL, dicesque NIHIL sine corpore tangi.  
 Cerne NIHIL, cerni dices NIHIL absque colore.  
 Surdum audit loquiturque NIHIL sine voce, volāt-  
 que  
 Absque ope pennarum, & graditur sine cruribus  
 ullis.  
 Absque loco motuque NIHIL per inane vagatur.



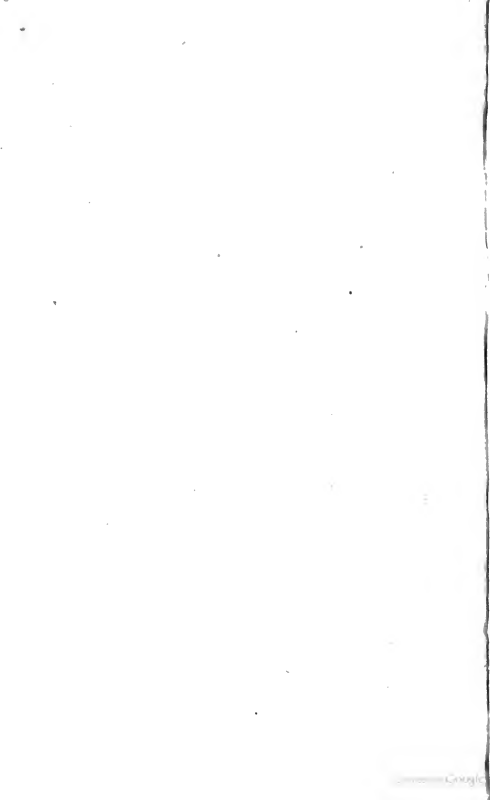
Humano generi utilius NIHIL arte medendi.  
 Ne rhombos igitur, neu Theſſala murmura tentet  
 Idalia vacuum trajectus arundine pectus,  
 Neu legat Idæo Dictæum in vertice gramen.  
 Vulneribus ſævi NIHIL auxiliatur amoris.  
 Vexerit & quemvis trans mœſtas portitor undas,  
 Ad ſuperos imo NIHIL hunc revocabit ab orco.  
 Inferni NIHIL inflectit præcordia regis,  
 Parcarúmque colos, & inexorabile penſum.  
 Obruta Phlegæis campis Titania pubes  
 Fulmineo ſenſit NIHIL eſſe potentius iſtu :  
 Porrigitur magni NIHIL extra mœnia mundi :  
 Diique NIHIL metuunt. Quid longo carmine plura  
 Commemorem ? virtute NIHIL præſtantius ipſa,  
 Splendidius NIHIL eſt ; NIHIL eſt Jove denique  
     majus.  
 Sed tempus finem argutis imponere nugis :  
 Ne tibi ſi multa laudem mea carmina charta,  
 De NIHILO NIHILI pariant ſaſtidia verſus,



---

R O S C O M M O N .

---



---

---

## ROSCOMMON.

**W**ENTWORTH DILLON, Earl of Roscommon, was born in Ireland, during the lieutenancy of Strafford, who, being his godfather, gave him his own surname. His father had been converted by Usher to the protestant religion; and when the popish rebellion broke out, Strafford, thinking the family in great danger from the fury of the Irish, sent for his godson, and placed him at his own seat in Yorkshire, where he was instructed in Latin; which he learned so as to write it with purity and elegance, though he was never able to retain the rules of grammar.

Such is the account given by Mr. *Fenton*, from whose notes on Waller most of this account

count must be borrowed, though I know not whether all that he relates is certain. The instructor whom he assigns to Roscommon is one Dr. *Hall*, by whom he cannot mean the famous *Hall*, then an old man and a bishop.

When the storm broke out upon Strafford, his house was a shelter no longer; and Dillon, by the advice of Usher, went to *Caen*, where the Protestants had then an university, and continued his studies under *Bochart*.

Young Dillon, who was sent to study under Bochart, and who is represented as having already made great proficiency in literature, could not be more than nine years old. Strafford went to govern Ireland in 1633, and was put to death eight years afterwards. That he was sent to *Caen*, is certain; that he was a great scholar, may be doubted.

At *Caen* he is said to have had some preternatural intelligence of his father's death.

“ The

“ The lord Roscommon, being a boy of  
 “ ten years of age, at Caen in Normandy,  
 “ one day was, as it were, madly extrava-  
 “ gant in playing, leaping, getting over  
 “ the tables, boards, &c. He was wont to  
 “ be sober enough; they said, God grant  
 “ this bodes no ill-luck to him! In the heat  
 “ of this extravagant fit, he cries out, *My*  
 “ *father is dead.* A fortnight after, news  
 “ came from Ireland that his father was dead.  
 “ This account I had from Mr. Knolles,  
 “ who was his governor, and then with  
 “ him,—since secretary to the earl of Straf-  
 “ ford; and I have heard his lordship’s  
 “ relations confirm the same.” *Aubrey’s*  
*Miscellanny.*

The present age is very little inclined to  
 favour any accounts of this kind, nor will  
 the name of Aubrey much recommend it to  
 credit: it ought not, however, to be omitted,  
 because better evidence of a fact cannot easily  
 be found than is here offered, and it must be  
 by preserving such relations that we may at  
 last judge how much they are to be regarded.  
 If we stay to examine this account, we shall

see difficultiés on both sides: here is a relation of a fact given by a man who had no interest to deceive, and who could not be deceived himself; and here is, on the other hand, a miracle which produces no effect; the order of nature is interrupted, to discover not a future but only a distant event, the knowledge of which is of no use to him to whom it is revealed. Between these difficulties, what way shall be found? Is reason or testimony to be rejected? I believe what Osborne says of an appearance of sanctity may be applied to such impulses or anticipations as this: *Do not wholly slight them, because they may be true: but do not easily trust them, because they may be false.*

The state both of England and Ireland was at this time such, that he who was absent from either country had very little temptation to return: and therefore Roscommon, when he left Caen, travelled into Italy, and amused himself with its antiquities, and particularly with medals, in which he acquired uncommon skill.

At



At the Restoration, with the other friends of monarchy, he came to England, was made captain of the band of pensioners, and learned so much of the dissoluteness of the court, that he addicted himself immoderately to gaming, by which he was engaged in frequent quarrels, and which undoubtedly brought upon him its usual concomitants, extravagance and distress.

After some time a dispute about part of his estate forced him into Ireland, where he was made by the duke of Ormond captain of the guards, and met with an adventure thus related by *Fenton*.

“ He was at Dublin as much as ever dis-  
 “ tempered with the same fatal affection for  
 “ play, which engaged him in one adven-  
 “ ture that well deserves to be related. As  
 “ he returned to his lodgings from a gaming-  
 “ table, he was attacked in the dark by three  
 “ ruffians, who were employed to assassinate  
 “ him. The Earl defended himself with so  
 “ much resolution, that he dispatched one of  
 “ the aggressors; whilst a gentleman, acci-  
 “ dentally

“ dentally passing that way, interposed, and  
 “ disarmed another : the third secured him-  
 “ self by flight. This generous assistant was  
 “ a disbanded officer, of a good family and  
 “ fair reputation ; who, by what we call the  
 “ partiality of fortune, to avoid censuring the  
 “ iniquities of the times, wanted even a plain  
 “ suit of cloaths to make a decent appearance  
 “ at the Castle. But his lordship, on this  
 “ occasion, presenting him to the Duke of  
 “ Ormond, with great importunity prevailed  
 “ with his grace, that he might resign his  
 “ post of captain of the guards to his friend ;  
 “ which for about three years the gentleman  
 “ enjoyed, and, upon his death, the duke  
 “ returned the commission to his generous  
 “ benefactor.”

When he had finished his business, he re-  
 turned to London ; was made Master of the  
 Horse to the Dutchess of York ; and married  
 the Lady Frances, daughter of the Earl of  
 Burlington, and widow of Colonel Courteney.

He now busied his mind with literary pro-  
 jects, and formed the plan of a society for  
 refining our language, and fixing its standard ;

*in*

*in imitation, says Fenton, of those learned and polite societies with which he had been acquainted abroad.* In this design his friend Dryden is said to have assisted him.

The same design, it is well known, was revived by Dr. Swift in the ministry of Oxford; but it has never since been publicly mentioned, though at that time great expectations were formed by some at least of its establishment and its effects. Such a society might, perhaps, without much difficulty, be collected; but that it would produce what is expected from it, may be doubted.

The Italian academy seems to have obtained its end. The language was refined, and so fixed that it has changed but little. The French academy thought that they refined their language, and doubtless thought rightly; but the event has not shewn that they fixed it; for the French of the present time is very different from that of the last century.

In this country an academy could be expected to do but little. If an academician's

place were profitable, it would be given by interest; if attendance were gratuitous, it would be rarely paid, and no man would endure the least disgust. Unanimity is impossible, and debate would separate the assembly.

But suppose the philological decree made and promulgated, what would be its authority? In absolute governments, there is sometimes a general reverence paid to all that has the sanction of power, and the countenance of greatness. How little this is the state of our country needs not to be told. We live in an age in which it is a kind of publick sport to refuse all respect that cannot be enforced. The edicts of an English academy would probably be read by many, only that they might be sure to disobey them.

That our language is in perpetual danger of corruption, cannot be denied; but what prevention can be found? The present manners of the nation would deride authority, and therefore nothing is left but that every writer should criticise himself.

All

All hopes of new literary institutions were quickly suppressed by the contentious turbulence of King James's reign; and Roscommon, foreseeing that some violent concussion of the State was at hand, purposed to retire to Rome, alleging, that *it was best to sit near the chimney when the chamber smoked*; a sentence, of which the application seems not very clear.

His departure was delayed by the gout; and he was so impatient either of hinderance or of pain, that he submitted himself to a French empirick, who is said to have repelled the disease into his bowels.

At the moment in which he expired, he uttered, with an energy of voice that expressed the most fervent devotion, two lines of his own version of *Dies Iræ*:

My God, my Father, and my Friend,  
Do not forsake me in my end.

—He died in 1684; and was buried with great pomp in Westminster-Abbey.

His poetical character is given by Mr. Fenton :

“ In his writings,” says Fenton, “ we view  
“ the image of a mind which was naturally  
“ serious and solid ; richly furnished and  
“ adorned with all the ornaments of learn-  
“ ing, unaffectedly disposed in the most re-  
“ gular and elegant order. His imagination  
“ might have probably been more fruitful  
“ and sprightly, if his judgement had been  
“ less severe. But that severity (delivered in  
“ a masculine, clear, succinct style) contri-  
“ buted to make him so eminent in the didac-  
“ tical manner, that no man, with justice,  
“ can affirm he was ever equalled by any of  
“ our nation, without confessing at the same  
“ time that he is inferior to none. In some  
“ other kinds of writing his genius seems to  
“ have wanted fire to attain the point of per-  
“ fection ; but who can attain it ? ”

From this account of the riches of his mind, who would not imagine that they had been displayed in large volumes and numerous performances ? Who would not, after the  
perusal

perusal of this character, be surpris'd to find that all the proofs of this genius, and knowledge and judgement, are not sufficient to form a single book, or to appear otherwise than in conjunction with the works of some other writer of the same petty size? But thus it is that characters are written: we know somewhat, and we imagine the rest. The observation, that his imagination would probably have been more fruitful and sprightly if his judgement had been less severe, may be answered, by a remarker somewhat inclined to cavil, by a contrary supposition, that his judgement would probably have been less severe, if his imagination had been more fruitful. It is ridiculous to oppose judgement to imagination; for it does not appear that men have necessarily less of one as they have more of the other.

We must allow of Roscommon, what Fenton has not mentioned so distinctly as he ought, and what is yet very much to his honour, that he is perhaps the only correct writer in verse before Addison; and that, if there are not so many or so great beauties in his compositions as in those of some contemporaries,

poraries, there are at least fewer faults. Nor is this his highest praise; for Mr. Pope has celebrated him as the only moral writer of King Charles's reign :

Unhappy Dryden ! in all Charles's days,  
Roscommon only boasts unspotted lays.

His great work is his Essay on Translated Verse; of which Dryden writes thus in the preface to his Miscellanies :

“ It was my Lord Roscommon's Essay on  
“ Translated Verse,” says Dryden, “ which  
“ made me uneasy, till I tried whether or no  
“ I was capable of following his rules, and  
“ of reducing the speculation into practice.  
“ For many a fair precept in poetry is like a  
“ seeming demonstration in mathematicks,  
“ very specious in the diagram, but failing  
“ in the mechanick operation. I think I have  
“ generally observed his instructions: I am  
“ sure my reason is sufficiently convinced  
“ both of their truth and usefulness; which,  
“ in other words, is to confess no less a vanity  
“ than to pretend that I have, at least in some  
“ places, made examples to his rules.”

This



This declaration of Dryden will, I am afraid, be found little more than one of those cursory civilities which one author pays to another; for when the sum of lord Roscommon's precepts is collected, it will not be easy to discover how they can qualify their reader for a better performance of translation than might have been attained by his own reflections.

He that can abstract his mind from the elegance of the poetry, and confine it to the sense of the precepts, will find no other direction than that the author should be suitable to the translator's genius; that he should be such as may deserve a translation; that he who intends to translate him should endeavour to understand him; that perspicuity should be studied, and unusual and uncouth names sparingly inserted; and that the style of the original should be copied in its elevation and depression. These are the rules that are celebrated as so definite and important, and for the delivery of which to mankind so much honour has been paid. Roscommon has indeed deserved his praises, had they

been given with discernment, and bestowed not on the rules themselves, but the art with which they are introduced, and the decorations with which they are adorned.

The Essay, though generally excellent, is not without its faults. The story of the Quack, borrowed from Boileau, was not worth the importation : he has confounded the British and Saxon mythology :

I grant that from some mossy idol oak,  
In double rhymes, our *Thor* and *Woden* spoke.

The oak, as I think Gildon has observed, belonged to the British druids, and *Thor* and *Woden* were Saxon deities. Of the *double rhymes*, which he so liberally supposes, he certainly had no knowledge.

His interposition of a long paragraph of blank verses is unwarrantably licentious. Latin poets might as well have introduced a series of iambicks among their heroicks.

His next work is the translation of the Art of Poetry ; which has received, in my opinion, not less praise than it deserves. Blank verse, left merely to its numbers, has little operation either on the ear or mind : it can hardly support itself without bold figures and striking images. A poem frigidly didactic, without rhyme, is so near to prose, that the reader only scorns it for pretending to be verse,

*Just  
remark*

Having disentangled himself from the difficulties of rhyme, he may justly be expected to give the sense of Horace with great exactness, and to suppress no subtilty of sentiment for the difficulty of expressing it. This demand, however, his translation will not satisfy ; what he found obscure, I do not know that he has ever cleared.

Among his smaller works, the Eclogue of Virgil and the *Dies Iræ* are well translated ; though the best line in the *Dies Iræ* is borrowed from Dryden. In return, succeeding poets have borrowed from Roscommon.

In

In the verses on the Lap-dog, the pronouns *thou* and *you* are offensively confounded; and the turn at the end is from Waller.

His versions of the two odes of Horace are made with great liberty, which is not recompensed by much elegance or vigour.

His political verses are spritely, and when they were written must have been very popular.

Of the scene of *Guarini*, and the prologue to *Pompey*, Mrs. Phillips, in her letters to Sir Charles Cotterel, has given the history.

“ Lord Roscommon,” says she, “ is certainly one of the most promising young noblemen in Ireland. He has paraphrased a Psalm admirably, and a scene of *Pastor Fido* very finely, in some places much better than Sir Richard Fanshawe. This was undertaken merely in compliment to me, who happened to say that it was the best scene in Italian, and the worst in English.  
“ He

“ He was only two hours about it, It begins  
“ thus :

“ Dear happy groves, and you the dark retreat  
“ Of silent horror, Rest’s eternal seat.”

From these lines, which are since somewhat mended, it appears that he did not think a work of two hours fit to endure the eye of criticism without revival.

When Mrs. Phillips was in Ireland, some ladies that had seen her translation of Pompey, resolved to bring it on the stage at Dublin ; and, to promote their design, Lord Roscommon gave them a prologue, and Sir Edward Dering an Epilogue ; “ which,” says he, “ are the best performances of those kinds I ever saw.” If this is not criticism, it is at least gratitude. The thought of bringing Cæsar and Pompey into Ireland, the only country over which Cæsar never had any power, is lucky,

Of Roscommon’s works, the judgement of the publick seems to be right. He is elegant, but not great ; he never labours after  
exquisite

exquisite beauties, and he seldom falls into gross faults. His versification is smooth, but rarely vigorous, and his rhymes are remarkably exact. He improved taste, if he did not enlarge knowledge, and may be numbered among the benefactors to English literature.

OTWAY.

---

O T W A Y.

---





## O T W A Y.

OF THOMAS OTWAY, one of the first names in the English drama, little is known; nor is there any part of that little which his biographer can take pleasure in relating.

He was born at Trotton in Suffex, March 3, 1651, the son of Mr. Humphry Otway, rector of *Woolbeding*. From Winchester-school, where he was educated, he was entered in 1669 a commoner of Christ-church; but left the university without a degree, whether for want of money, or from impatience of academical restraint, or mere eagerness to mingle with the world, is not known.

It

It seems likely that he was in hope of being busy and conspicuous; for he went to London, and commenced player; but found himself unable to gain any reputation on the stage.

This kind of inability he shared with Shakspeare and Jonson, as he shared likewise some of their excellencies. It seems reasonable to expect that a great dramatick poet should without difficulty become a great actor; that he who can feel, could express; that he who can excite passion, should exhibit with great readiness its external modes: but since experience has fully proved that of those powers, whatever be their affinity, one may be possessed in a great degree by him who has very little of the other; it must be allowed that they depend upon different faculties, or on different use of the same faculty; that the actor must have a pliancy of mien, a flexibility of countenance, and a variety of tones, which the poet may be easily supposed to want; or that the attention of the poet and the player have been differently employed; the one has been considering thought, and  
the

the other action ; one has watched the heart, and the other contemplated the face.

Though he could not gain much notice as a player, he felt in himself such powers as might qualify for a dramattick author ; and in 1675, his twenty-fifth year, produced *Alcibiades*, a tragedy ; whether from the *Alcibiade* of *Palaprat*, I have not means to enquire. Langbain, the great detector of plagiarifm, is filent.

In 1677 he published *Titus and Berenice*, tranflated from Rapin, with the *Cheats of Scapin* from Moliere ; and in 1678 *Friendfhip in Faftion*, a comedy, which, whatever might be its firft reception, was, upon its revival at Drury-lane in 1749, hisled off the ftage for immorality and obfcenity.

Want of morals, or of decency, did not in thofe days exclude any man from the company of the wealthy and the gay, if he brought with him any powers of entertainment ; and Otway is faid to have been at this time a favourite companion of the diffolute wits. But, as he who defires no virtue in

his companion has no virtue in himself, those whom Otway frequented had no purpose of doing more for him than to pay his reckoning. They desired only to drink and laugh; their fondness was without benevolence, and their familiarity without friendship. Men of wit, says one of Otway's biographers, received at that time no favour from the Great but to share their riots; *from which they were dismissed again to their own narrow circumstances. Thus they languished in poverty without the support of imminence.*

Some exception, however, must be made. The Earl of Plymouth, one of King Charles's natural sons, procured for him a cornet's commission in some troops then sent into Flanders. But Otway did not prosper in his military character; for he soon left his commission behind him, whatever was the reason, and came back to London in extreme indigence; which Rochester mentions with merciless insolence in the *Session of the Poets*:

Tom Otway came next, Tom Shadwell's dear  
zany,  
And swears for heroicks he writes best of any;  
Don

Don Carlos his pockets so amply had fill'd,  
That his mange was quite cur'd, and his lice  
were all kill'd.

But Apollo had seen his face on the stage,  
And prudently did not think fit to engage  
The scum of a play-house, for the prop of an }  
age.

*Don Carlos*, from which he is represented as having received so much benefit, was played in 1675. It appears, by the Lam-  
poon, to have had great success, and is said to have been played thirty nights together. This however it is reasonable to doubt, as so long a continuance of one play upon the stage is a very wide deviation from the practice of that time; when the ardour for theatrical entertainments was not yet diffused through the whole people, and the audience, consisting nearly of the same persons, could be drawn together only by variety.

The *Orphan* was exhibited in 1680. This is one of the few plays that keep possession of the stage, and has pleased for almost a century, through all the vicissitudes of dramatick fashion. Of this play nothing new can easily be said. It is a domestick tragedy drawn

from middle life. Its whole power is upon the affections; for it is not written with much comprehension of thought, or elegance of expression. But if the heart is interested, many other beauties may be wanting, yet not be missed.

The same year produced *The History and Fall of Caius Marius*; much of which is borrowed from the *Romeo and Juliet* of Shakespeare.

In 1683 was published the first, and next year the second, parts of *The Soldier's Fortune*, two comedies now forgotten; and in 1685 his last and greatest dramatick work, *Venice preserved*, a tragedy, which still continues to be one of the favourites of the publick, notwithstanding the want of morality in the original design, and the despicable scenes of vile comedy with which he has diversified his tragick action. By comparing this with his *Orphan*, it will appear that his images were by time become stronger, and his language more energetick. The striking passages are in every mouth; and the publick seems to judge rightly of the faults and excellencies of  
of

of this play, that it is the work of a man not attentive to decency, nor zealous for virtue; but of one who conceived forcibly, and drew originally, by consulting nature in his own breast.

Together with those plays he wrote the poems which are in the late collection, and translated from the French the *History of the Triumvirate*.

All this was performed before he was thirty-four years old; for he died April 14, 1685, in a manner which I am unwilling to mention. Having been compelled by his necessities to contract debts, and hunted, as is supposed, by the terriers of the law, he retired to a publick house on Tower-hill, where he died of want; or, as it is related by one of his biographers, by swallowing, after a long fast, a piece of bread which charity had supplied. He went out, as is reported, almost naked, in the rage of hunger, and finding a gentleman in a neighbouring coffee-house, asked him for a shilling. The gentleman gave him a guinea; and Otway going away bought a roll, and was choaked with the first

Z 3

mouthful.

mouthful. All this, I hope, is not true ; but that indigence, and its concomitants, sorrow and despondency, brought him to the grave, has never been denied.

Of the poems which the late collection admits, the longest is the *Poet's Complaint of his Muse*, part of which I do not understand ; and in that which is less obscure I find little to commend. The language is often gross, and the numbers are harsh. Otway had not much cultivated versification, nor much replenished his mind with general knowledge. His principal power was in moving the passions, to which Dryden in his latter years left an illustrious testimony. He appears, by some of his verses, to have been a zealous royalist : and had what was in those times the common reward of loyalty ; he lived and died neglected.

WALLER.



---

W A L L E R,

---



## W A L L E R.

**E**DMUND WALLER was born on the third of March, 1605, at Colshill in Hertfordshire. His father was Robert Waller, Esquire, of Agmondesham in Buckinghamshire, whose family was originally a branch of the Kentish Wallers; and his mother was the daughter of John Hampden, of Hampden in the same county, and sister to Hampden, the zealot of rebellion.

His father died while he was yet an infant, but left him an yearly income of three thousand five hundred pounds; which, rating together the value of money and the customs of life, we may reckon more than equivalent to ten thousand at the present time.

He was educated, by the care of his mother, at Eaton ; and removed afterwards to King's College in Cambridge. He was sent to parliament in his eighteenth, if not in his sixteenth year, and frequented the court of James the First, where he heard a very remarkable conversation, which the writer of the Life prefixed to his Works, who seems to have been well informed of facts, though he may sometimes err in chronology, has delivered as indubitably certain.

“ He found Dr. Andrews, bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Neale, bishop of Durham, “ standing behind his Majesty's chair ; and “ there happened something extraordinary,” continues this writer, “ in the conversation “ those prelates had with the king, on which “ Mr. Waller did often reflect. His majesty “ asked the bishops, “ My Lords, cannot I “ take my subjects money, when I want “ it, without all this formality of parliament ?” The bishop of Durham readily “ answered, “ God forbid, Sir, but you “ should : you are the breath of our nostrils.” “ Whereupon the King turned, and said to “ the bishop of Winchester, “ Well, my “ Lord,

“ Lord, what say you ? ” “ Sir, replied the  
 “ bishop, I have no skill to judge of parlia-  
 “ mentary cases.’ The king answered, “ No  
 “ put-offs, my Lord ; answer me present-  
 “ ly.” “ Then, Sir, said he, I think it is  
 “ lawful for you to take my brother Neale’s  
 “ money ; for he offers it.’ Mr. Waller  
 “ said, the company was pleased with this  
 “ answer, and the wit of it seemed to affect  
 “ the king ; for, a certain lord coming in soon  
 “ after, his majesty cried out, “ Oh, my lord,  
 “ they say you lig with my Lady.” “ No,  
 “ Sir, says his Lordship in confusion ; but I  
 “ like her company, because she has so much  
 “ wit.’ “ Why then, says the king, do  
 “ you not lig with my Lord of Winchester  
 “ there ? ”

Waller’s political and poetical life began nearly together. In his eighteenth year he wrote the poem that appears first in his works, on “ the Prince’s Escape at St Andero ; ” a piece which justifies the observation made by one of his editors, that he attained, by a felicity like instinct, a style which perhaps will never be obsolete ; and that, “ were we  
 “ to judge only by the wording, we could  
 “ not

“ not know what was wrote at twenty, and  
“ what at fourscore.” His versification was,  
in his first essay, such as it appears in his last  
performance. By the perusal of Fairfax’s  
translation of Tasso, to which, as Dryden  
relates, he confessed himself indebted for the  
smoothness of his numbers, and by his own  
nicety of observation, he had already formed  
such a system of metrical harmony as he  
never afterwards much needed, or much en-  
deavoured, to improve. Denham corrected  
his numbers by experience, and gained  
ground gradually upon the ruggedness of his  
age; but what was acquired by Denham,  
was inherited by Waller.

The next poem, of which the subject  
seems to fix the time, is supposed by Mr.  
Fenton to be the Address to the Queen,  
which he considers as congratulating her ar-  
rival, in Waller’s twentieth year. He is appa-  
rently mistaken; for the mention of the na-  
tion’s obligations to her frequent pregnancy,  
proves that it was written when she had  
brought many children. We have therefore  
no date of any other poetical production be-  
fore that which the murder of the Duke of  
Buck-

Buckingham occasioned : the steadiness with which the King received the news in the chapel, deserved indeed to be rescued from oblivion.

Neither of these pieces seem to have been the sudden effusion of fancy. In one, the prediction of the marriage with the princess of France, must have been written after the event ; in the other, the promises of the King's kindness to the descendants of Buckingham, which could not be known till it had appeared by its effects, shew that time was taken for revision and improvement. It is not indeed known that they were published till they appeared long afterwards with other poems.

Waller was not one of those idolaters of praise who cultivate their minds at the expence of their fortunes. Rich as he was by inheritance, he took care early to grow richer by marrying Mrs. Banks, a great heiress in the city, whom the interest of the court was employed to obtain for Mr. Crofts. Having brought him a son, who died young, and a daughter, who was afterwards married to Mr.

Mr. Dormer of Oxfordshire, she died in child-bed, and left him a widower of about five and twenty, gay and wealthy, to please himself with another marriage.

Being too young to resist beauty, and probably too vain to think himself resistable, he fixed his heart, perhaps half fondly and half ambitiously, upon the Lady Dorothea Sidney, eldest daughter of the Earl of Leicester, whom he courted by all the poetry in which Sacharissa is celebrated; the name is derived from the Latin appellation of *sugar*, and implies, if it means any thing, a spiritless mildness, and dull good-nature, such as excites rather tenderness than esteem, and such as, though always treated with kindness, is never honoured or admired.

Yet he describes Sacharissa as a sublime predominating beauty, of lofty charms, and imperious influence, on whom he looks with amazement rather than fondness, whose chains he wishes, though in vain, to break, and whose presence is *wine that inflames to madness*.

His



His acquaintance with this high-born dame gave wit no opportunity of boasting its influence; she was not to be subdued by the powers of verse, but rejected his addresses, it is said, with disdain, and drove him away to solace his disappointment with Amoret or Phillis. She married in 1639 the Earl of Sunderland, who died at Newberry in the king's cause; and, in her old age, meeting somewhere with Waller, asked him, when he would again write such verses upon her; "When you are as young, Madam," said he, "and as handsome, as you were then."

In this part of his life it was that he was known to Clarendon, among the rest of the men who were eminent in that age for genius and literature; but known so little to his advantage, that they who read his character will not much condemn Sacharissa, that she did not descend from her rank to his embraces, nor think every excellence comprised in wit.

The Lady was, indeed, inexorable; but his uncommon qualifications, though they had no power upon her, recommended him  
to

to the most illustrious scholars and statesmen; and undoubtedly many beauties of that time, however they might receive his love, were proud of his praises. Who they were, whom he dignifies with poetical names, cannot now be known. Amoret, according to Mr. Fenton, was the Lady Sophia Murray. Perhaps by traditions preserved in families more may be discovered.

From the verses written at Penshurst, it has been collected that he diverted his disappointment by a voyage; and his biographers, from his poem on the Whales, think it not improbable that he visited the Bermudas; but it seems much more likely that he should amuse himself with forming an imaginary scene, than that so important an incident, as a visit to America, should have been left floating in conjectural probability.

From his twenty-eighth to his thirty-fifth year, he wrote his pieces on the Reduction of Sallee; on the Reparation of St. Paul's; to the King on his Navy; the panegyrick on the Queen Mother; the two poems to the Earl of Northumberland; and perhaps others,

others, of which the time cannot be discovered.

When he had lost all hopes of Sachariffa, he looked round him for an easier conquest, and gained a Lady of the family of Bresse, or Breaux. The time of his marriage is not exactly known. It has not been discovered that this wife was won by his poetry; nor is any thing told of her, but that she brought him many children. He doubtless praised many whom he would have been afraid to marry; and perhaps married one whom he would have been ashamed to praise. Many qualities contribute to domestick happiness, upon which poetry has no colours to bestow; and many airs and fallies may delight imagination, which he who flatters them never can approve. There are charms made only for distant admiration. No spectacle is nobler than a blaze.

*ingenious & clever*

Of this wife, his biographers have recorded that she gave him five sons and eight daughters.

During the long interval of parliament, he is represented as living among those with  
 Vol. I.                      A a                      whom

whom it was most honourable to converse, and enjoying an exuberant fortune with that independence and liberty of speech and conduct which wealth ought always to produce. He was however considered as the kinsman of Hampden, and was therefore supposed by the courtiers not to favour them.

When the parliament was called in 1640, it appeared that Waller's political character had not been mistaken. The King's demand of a supply produced one of those noisy speeches which disaffection and discontent regularly dictate; a speech filled with hyperbolical complaints of imaginary grievances. "They," says he, "who think themselves already undone can never apprehend themselves in danger, and they who have nothing left can never give freely." Political truth is equally in danger from the praises of courtiers, and the exclamations of patriots.

He then proceeds to rail at the clergy, being sure at that time of a favourable audience. His topick is such as will always serve its purpose; an accusation of acting and preaching only for preferment: and he ex-  
horts

horts the Commons *carefully* to *provide* for their *protection against Pulpit Law*.

It always gratifies curiosity to trace a sentiment. Waller has in this speech quoted Hooker in one passage; and in another has copied him, without quoting. "Religion," says Waller, "ought to be the first thing in our purpose and desires; but that which is first in dignity is not always to precede in order of time; for well-being supposes a being; and the first impediment which men naturally endeavour to remove, is the want of those things without which they cannot subsist. God first assigned unto Adam maintenance of life, and gave him a title to the rest of the creatures before he appointed a law to observe."

"God first assigned Adam," says Hooker, "maintenance of life, and then appointed him a law to observe.—True it is, that the kingdom of God must be the first thing in our purpose and desires; but inasmuch as a righteous life presupposeth life, inasmuch as to live virtuously it is impossible, except we live; therefore the first impediment

“ which naturally we endeavour to remove is  
“ penury, and want of things without which  
“ we cannot live.” B. I. sect. 9.

The speech is vehement; but the great position, that grievances ought to be redressed before supplies are granted, is agreeable enough to law and reason: nor was Waller, if his biographer may be credited, such an enemy to the King, as not to wish his distresses lightened; for he relates, “ that the  
“ King sent particularly to Waller, to second  
“ his demand of some subsidies to pay off  
“ the army; and Sir Henry Vane objecting  
“ against first voting a supply, because the  
“ King would not accept unless it came up  
“ to his proportion, Mr. Waller spoke earnestly to Sir Thomas Jermyn, comptroller  
“ of the household, to save his master from  
“ the effects of so bold a falsity; ‘ for, he  
“ said, I am but a country gentleman, and  
“ cannot pretend to know the King’s mind:’  
“ but Sir Thomas durst not contradict the  
“ secretary; and his son, the Earl of St. Albans, afterwards told Mr. Waller, that his  
“ father’s cowardice ruined the King.”

In the Long Parliament, which, unhappily for the nation, met Nov. 3, 1640, Waller represented Agmondesham the third time; and was considered by the discontented party as a man sufficiently trusty and acrimonious to be employed in managing the prosecution of Judge Crawley, for his opinion in favour of ship-money; and his speech shews that he did not disappoint their expectations. He was probably the more ardent, as his uncle Hampden had been particularly engaged in the dispute, and by a sentence which seems generally to be thought unconstitutional particularly injured.

He was not however a bigot to his party, nor adopted all their opinions. When the great question, whether Episcopacy ought to be abolished, was debated, he spoke against the innovation so coolly, so reasonably, and so firmly, that it is not without great injury to his name that his speech, which was as follows, has been hitherto omitted in his works:

\* “ There is no doubt but the sense of  
“ what this nation hath suffered from the  
“ present Bishops, hath produced these com-  
“ plaints; and the apprehensions men have  
“ of suffering the like, in time to come, make  
“ so many desire the taking away of Episco-  
“ pacy: but I conceive it is possible that we  
“ may not, now, take a right measure of the  
“ minds of the people by their petitions;  
“ for, when they subscribed them, the Bishops  
“ were armed with a dangerous commission  
“ of making new canons, imposing new oaths,  
“ and the like; but now we have disarmed  
“ them of that power. These petitioners,  
“ lately, did look upon Episcopacy as a beast  
“ armed with horns and claws; but now  
“ that we have cut and pared them, (and  
“ may, if we see cause, yet reduce it into  
“ narrower bounds) it may, perhaps, be more  
“ agreeable. Howsoever, if they be still in  
“ passion, it becomes us soberly to consider  
“ the right use and antiquity thereof; and  
“ not to comply further with a general desire,  
“ than may stand with a general good.

\* This speech has been retrieved, from a paper printed  
at that time, by the writers of the Parliamentary History.

“ We



“ We have already shewed, that episco-  
 “ pacy, and the evils thereof, are mingled  
 “ like water, and oil ; we have also, in part,  
 “ fevered them ; but I believe you will find,  
 “ that our laws and the present government  
 “ of the church are mingled like wine and  
 “ water ; so inseparable, that the abrogation  
 “ of, at least, a hundred of our laws is  
 “ desired in these petitions. I have often  
 “ heard a noble answer of the Lords, com-  
 “ mended in this house, to a proposition of  
 “ like nature, but of less consequence ; they  
 “ gave no other reason of their refusal but  
 “ this, *Nolumus mutare Leges Angliæ* : it was  
 “ the bishops who so answered then ; and it  
 “ would become the dignity and wisdom of  
 “ this house to answer the people, now, with  
 “ a *Nolumus mutare*.

“ I see some are moved with a number of  
 “ hands against the Bishops ; which, I con-  
 “ fess, rather inclines me to their defence :  
 “ for I look upon episcopacy as a counterescarp,  
 “ or out-work ; which, if it be taken by this  
 “ assault of the people, and, withall, this  
 “ mystery once revealed, *That we must deny*

“ *them nothing when they ask it thus in troops,*  
 “ we may, in the next place, have as hard  
 “ a task to defend our property, as we have  
 “ lately had to recover it from the Preroga-  
 “ tive. If, by multiplying hands and peti-  
 “ tions, they prevail for an equality in things  
 “ ecclesiastical, the next demand perhaps may  
 “ be *Lex Agraria*, the like equality in things  
 “ temporal.

“ The Roman story tells us, That when  
 “ the people began to flock about the senate,  
 “ and were more curious to direct and know  
 “ what was done, than to obey, that Common-  
 “ wealth soon came to ruin: their *Legem rogare*  
 “ grew quickly to be a *Legem ferre*; and after,  
 “ when their legions had found that they  
 “ could make a Dictator, they never suffered  
 “ the senate to have a voice any more in such  
 “ election.

“ If these great innovations proceed, I  
 “ shall expect a flat and level in learning too,  
 “ as well as in church-preferments: *Honos*  
 “ *alit Artes*. And though it be true, that  
 “ grave and pious men do study for learning-  
 “ sake, and embrace virtue for itself; yet it  
 “ is

“ is as true, that youth, which is the season  
 “ when learning is gotten, is not without  
 “ ambition; nor will ever take pains to ex-  
 “ cell in any thing, when there is not some  
 “ hope of excelling others in reward and  
 “ dignity.

“ There are two reasons chiefly alleged  
 “ against our church-government.

“ First, Scripture, which, as some men  
 “ think, points out another form.

“ Second, The abuses of the present fu-  
 “ periors.

“ For Scripture, I will not dispute it in  
 “ this place; but I am confident that, when-  
 “ ever an equal division of lands and goods  
 “ shall be desired, there will be as many  
 “ places in Scripture found out, which  
 “ seem to favour that, as there are now al-  
 “ leged against the prelacy or preferment in  
 “ the church. And, as for abuses, where  
 “ you are now, in the Remonstrance, told,  
 “ what this and that poor man hath suffered  
 “ by the bishops, you may be presented with  
 “ a thou-

“ a thousand instances of poor men that  
 “ have received hard measure from their  
 “ landlords ; and of worldly goods abused, to  
 “ the injury of others, and disadvantage of  
 “ the owners.

“ And therefore, Mr. Speaker, my hum-  
 “ ble motion is, That we may settle men’s  
 “ minds herein ; and, by a question, declare  
 “ our resolution, *to reform*, that is *not to*  
 “ *abolish, Episcopacy.*”

It cannot but be wished that he, who  
 could speak in this manner, had been able to  
 act with spirit and uniformity.

When the Commons began to set the royal  
 authority at open defiance, Waller is said to  
 have withdrawn from the house, and to have  
 returned with the king’s permission ; and,  
 when the king set up his standard, he sent  
 him a thousand broad-pieces. He continued,  
 however, to sit in the rebellious conventicle ;  
 but “ spoke,” says Clarendon, “ with great  
 “ sharpness and freedom, which, now there  
 “ was no danger of being outvoted, was not  
 “ restrained ; and therefore used as an argu-  
 “ ment

“ ment against those who were gone upon  
 “ pretence that they were not suffered to de-  
 “ liver their opinion freely in the house,  
 “ which could not be believed, when all  
 “ men knew what liberty Mr. Waller took,  
 “ and spoke every day with impunity against  
 “ the sense and proceedings of the house.”

Waller, as he continued to sit, was one of the commissioners nominated by the parliament to treat with the king at Oxford; and when they were presented, the King said to him, “ Though you are the last, you are “ not the lowest nor the least in my favour.” Whitlock, who, being another of the commissioners, was witness of this kindness, imputes it to the king’s knowledge of the plot, in which Waller appeared afterwards to have been engaged against the parliament. Fenton, with equal probability, believes that his attempt to promote the royal cause arose from his sensibility of the king’s tenderness. Whitlock says nothing of his behaviour at Oxford: he was sent with several others to add pomp to the commission, but was not one of those to whom the trust of treating was imparted.

The

The engagement, known by the name of Waller's plot, was soon afterwards discovered. Waller had a brother-in-law, Tomkyns, who was clerk of the Queen's council; and at the same time had a very numerous acquaintance, and great influence, in the city. Waller and he, conversing with great confidence, told both their own secrets and those of their friends; and, surveying the wide extent of their conversation, imagined that they found in the majority of all ranks great disapprobation of the violence of the Commons, and unwillingness to continue the war. They knew that many favoured the king, whose fear concealed their loyalty; and many desired peace, though they durst not oppose the clamour for war; and they imagined that if those who had these good intentions could be informed of their own strength, and enabled by intelligence to act together, they might overpower the fury of sedition, by refusing to comply with the ordinance for the twentieth part, and the other taxes levied for the support of the rebel army, and by uniting great numbers in a petition for peace.

Lord

Lord Conway joined in the design, and, as Clarendon imagines, incidentally mingled, as he was a foldier, some martial hopes or projects, which however were only mentioned, the main design being to bring the loyal inhabitants to the knowledge of each other; for which purpose there was to be appointed one in every diftrict, to diftinguifh the friends of the king, the adherents to the parliament, and the neutrals. How far they proceeded does not appear; the result of their enquiry, as Pym declared, was, that within the walls for one that was for them, there were three againft them; but that without the walls for one that was againft them, there were three for them. Whether this was faid from knowledge or guefs, was perhaps never enquired.

It is the opinion of Clarendon, that in Waller's plan no violence or fanguinary refiftance was comprifed; that he intended only to abate the confidence of the rebels by publick declarations; and to weaken their power by an oppofition to new fupplies. This, in calmer times, and more than this, is done

without fear ; but such was the acrimony of the commons, that no method of obstructing them was safe.

About this time another design was formed by Sir Nicholas Crispe, a man of loyalty that deserves perpetual remembrance ; when he was a merchant in the city, he gave and procured the king, in his exigencies, an hundred thousand pounds ; and, when he was driven from the Exchange, raised a regiment, and commanded it.

Sir Nicholas flattered himself with an opinion, that some provocation would so much exasperate, or some opportunity so much encourage, the King's friends in the city, that they would break out in open resistance, and then would want only a lawful standard, and an authorized commander ; and extorted from the King, whose judgement yielded to importunity, a commission of array, directed to such as he thought proper to nominate, which was sent to London by the Lady Aubigny. She knew not what she carried, but was to deliver it on the communication of a certain token which Sir Nicholas imparted.

This



This commission could be only\*intended to lie ready till the time should require it. To have attempted to raise any forces, would have been certain destruction: it could be of use only when the forces should appear. This was, however, an act preparatory to martial hostility. Crispe would undoubtedly have put an end to the session of parliament, had his strength been equal to his zeal; and out of the design of Crispe, which involved very little danger, and that of Waller, which was an act purely civil, they compounded a horrid and dreadful plot.

The discovery of Waller's design is variously related. In Clarendon's History it is told, that a servant of Tomkyns, lurking behind the hangings when his master was in conference with Waller, heard enough to qualify him for an informer, and carried his intelligence to Pym. A manuscript, quoted in the Life of Waller, relates, that " he was  
" betrayed by his sister Price, and her presby-  
" terian chaplain Mr. Goode, who stole some  
" of his papers; and if he had not strangely  
" dreamed the night before, that his sister  
" had

“ had betrayed him, and thereupon burnt  
“ the rest of his papers by the fire that was  
“ in his chimney, he had certainly lost his  
“ life by it.” The question cannot be decided. It is not unreasonable to believe that the men in power, receiving intelligence from the sister, would employ the servant of Tomkyns to listen at the conference, that they might avoid an act so offensive as that of destroying the brother by the sister’s testimony.

The plot was published in the most terrific manner. On the 31st of May, at a solemn fast, when they were listening to the sermon, a messenger entered the church, and communicated his errand to Pym, who whispered it to others that were placed near him, and then went with them out of the church, leaving the rest in solicitude and amazement. They immediately sent guards to proper places, and that night apprehended Tomkyns and Waller; having yet traced nothing but that letters had been intercepted, from which it appeared that the parliament and the city were soon to be delivered into the hands of the cavaliers.

They

They perhaps yet knew little themselves, beyond some general and indistinct notices. "But Waller," says Clarendon, "was so confounded with fear, that he confessed whatever he had heard, said, thought, or seen; all that he knew of himself, and all that he suspected of others, without concealing any person of what degree or quality soever, or any discourse which he had ever upon any occasion entertained with them; what such and such Ladies of great honour, to whom, upon the credit of his wit and great reputation, he had been admitted, had spoke to him in their chambers upon the proceedings in the Houses, and how they had encouraged him to oppose them; what correspondence and intercourse they had with some Ministers of State at Oxford, and how they conveyed all intelligence thither." He accused the Earl of Portland and Lord Conway as co-operating in the transaction; and testified that the Earl of Northumberland had declared himself disposed in favour of any attempt that might check the violence of the Parliament, and reconcile them to the King.

He undoubtedly confessed much, which they could never have discovered, and perhaps somewhat which they would wish to have been suppressed; for it is inconvenient, in the conflict of factions, to have that disaffection known which cannot safely be punished.

Tomkyns was seized on the same night with Waller, and appears likewise to have partaken of his cowardice; for he gave notice of Crispe's commission of array, of which Clarendon never knew how it was discovered. Tomkyns had been sent with the token appointed, to demand it from Lady Aubigny, and had buried it in his garden, where, by his direction, it was dug up; and thus the rebels obtained, what Clarendon confesses them to have had, the original copy.

It can raise no wonder that they formed one plot out of these two designs, however remote from each other, when they saw the same agent employed in both, and found the commission of array in the hands of him who  
was

was employed in collecting the opinions and affections of the people.

Of the plot, thus combined, they took care to make the most. They sent Pym among the citizens, to tell them of their imminent danger, and happy escape; and inform them, that the design was to seize the "Lord Mayor and all the Committee of Militia, and would not spare one of them." They drew up a vow and covenant, to be taken by every member of either house, by which he declared his detestation of all conspiracies against the parliament, and his resolution to detect and oppose them. They then appointed a day of thanksgiving for this wonderful delivery; which shut out, says Clarendon, all doubts whether there had been such a deliverance, and whether the plot was real or fictitious.

On June 11, the Earl of Portland and Lord Conway were committed, one to the custody of the mayor, and the other of the sheriff; but their lands and goods were not seized.

Waller was still to immerse himself deeper in ignominy. The Earl of Portland and Lord Conway denied the charge, and there was no evidence against them but the confession of Waller, of which undoubtedly many would be inclined to question the veracity. With these doubts he was so much terrified, that he endeavoured to persuade Portland to a declaration like his own, by a letter extant in Fenton's edition. "But for me," says he, "you had never known any thing of this business, which was prepared for another; and therefore I cannot imagine why you should hide it so far as to contract your own ruin by concealing it, and persisting unreasonably to hide that truth, which, without you, already is, and will every day be made more, manifest. Can you imagine yourself bound in honour to keep that secret, which is already revealed by another; or possible it should still be a secret, which is known to one of the other sex?—If you persist to be cruel to yourself for their sakes who deserve it not, it will nevertheless be made appear, ere long, I fear, to your ruin. Surely, if I had the happiness to wait on  
" you,

“you, I could move you to compassionate  
 “both yourself and me, who, desperate as  
 “my case is, am desirous to die with the  
 “honour of being known to have declared  
 “the truth. You have no reason to contend  
 “to hide what is already revealed—inconfi-  
 “derately to throw away yourself, for the  
 “interest of others, to whom you are less  
 “obliged than you are aware of.”

This persuasion seems to have had little  
 effect. Portland sent (June 29) a letter to  
 the Lords, to tell them, that he “is in cus-  
 “tody, as he conceives, without any charge;  
 “and that, by what Mr. Waller hath threat-  
 “ened him with since he was imprisoned, he  
 “doth apprehend a very cruel, long, and  
 “ruinous restraint:—He therefore prays, that  
 “he may not find the effects of Mr. Waller’s  
 “threats, by a long and close imprisonment;  
 “but may be speedily brought to a legal trial,  
 “and then he is confident the vanity and  
 “falsehood of those informations which have  
 “been given against him will appear.”

In consequence of this letter, the Lords  
 ordered Portland and Waller to be confronted;

when the one repeated his charge, and the other his denial. The examination of the plot being continued (July 1), Thinn, usher of the house of Lords, deposed, that Mr. Waller having had a conference with the Lord Portland in an upper room, Lord Portland said, when he came down, “ Do me the  
“ favour to tell my Lord Northumberland,  
“ that Mr. Waller has extremely pressed me  
“ to save my own life and his, by throwing  
“ the blame upon the Lord Conway and the  
“ Earl of Northumberland.”

Waller, in his letter to Portland, tells him of the reasons, which he could urge with resistless efficacy in a personal conference; but he over-rated his own oratory: his vehemence, whether of persuasion or intreaty, was returned with contempt.

One of his arguments with Portland is, that the plot is already known to a woman. This woman was doubtless Lady Aubigny, who, upon this occasion, was committed to custody; but who, in reality, when she delivered the commission, knew not what it was.

The



The parliament then proceeded against the conspirators, and committed their trial to a council of war. Tomkyns and Chaloner were hanged near their own doors. Tomkyns, when he came to die, said it was a *foolish business*; and indeed there seems to have been no hope that it should escape discovery; for though never more than three met at a time, yet a design so extensive must, by necessity, be communicated to many, who could not be expected to be all faithful, and all prudent. Chaloner was attended at his execution by Hugh Peters.

The Earl of Northumberland, being too great for prosecution, was only once examined before the Lords. The Earl of Portland and Lord Conway, persisting to deny the charge, and no testimony but Waller's yet appearing against them, were, after a long imprisonment, admitted to bail. Hassel, the King's messenger, who carried the letters to Oxford, died the night before his trial. Hampden was kept in prison to the end of his life. They whose names were inserted in the commission of array were not capitally

B b 4

punished,

punished, as it could not be proved that they had consented to their own nomination; but they were considered as malignants, and their estates were seized.

“Waller, though confessedly,” says Clarendon, “the most guilty, with incredible dissimulation affected such a remorse of conscience, that his trial was put off, out of Christian compassion, till he might recover his understanding.” What use he made of this interval, with what liberality and success he distributed flattery and money, and how, when he was brought (July 4) before the House, he confessed and lamented, and submitted and implored, may be read in the History of the Rebellion, (B. vii.) The speech, to which Clarendon ascribes the preservation of his *dear-bought life*, is inserted in his works. The great historian, however, seems to have been mistaken in relating that *he prevailed* in the principal part of his supplication, *not to be tried by a Council of War*; for, according to Whitlock, he was by expulsion from the House abandoned to the tribunal which he so much dreaded, and, being tried and condemned, was reprieved by Essex; but

but after a year's imprisonment, in which time resentment grew less acrimonious, paying a fine of ten thousand pounds, he was permitted *to recollect himself in another country.*

Of his behaviour in this part of his life, it is not necessary to direct the reader's opinion. "Let us not," says his last ingenious biographer, "condemn him with untempered severity, because he was not a prodigy which the world hath seldom seen, because his character included not the poet, the orator, and the hero."

For the place of his exile he chose France, and staid some time at Roan, where his daughter Margaret was born, who was afterwards his favourite, and his amanuensis. He then removed to Paris, where he lived with great splendor and hospitality; and from time to time amused himself with poetry, in which he sometimes speaks of the rebels, and their usurpation, in the natural language of an honest man.

At last it became necessary, for his support, to sell his wife's jewels; and being reduced,

as

as he said, at last *to the rump-jewel*, he solicited from Cromwell permission to return, and obtained it by the interest of colonel Scroop, to whom his sister was married. Upon the remains of a fortune, which the danger of his life had very much diminished, he lived at Hall-barn, a house built by himself, very near to Beaconsfield, where his mother resided. His mother, though related to Cromwell and Hampden, was zealous for the royal cause, and, when Cromwell visited her, used to reproach him; he, in return, would throw a napkin at her, and say he would not dispute with his aunt; but finding in time that she acted for the king, as well as talked, he made her a prisoner to her own daughter, in her own house. If he would do any thing, he could not do less.

Cromwell, now protector, received Waller, as his kinsman, to familiar conversation. Waller, as he used to relate, found him sufficiently versed in ancient history; and when any of his enthusiastick friends came to advise or consult him, could sometimes overhear him discoursing in the cant of the times: but, when he returned, he would say, "Cousin  
"Waller,

“Waller, I must talk to these men in their  
“own way :” and resumed the common style  
of conversation.

He repaid the Protector for his favours (1654) by the famous panegyrick, which has been always considered as the first of his poetical productions. His choice of encomiastick topicks is very judicious ; for he considers Cromwell in his exaltation, without enquiring how he attained it ; there is consequently no mention of the rebel or the regicide. All the former part of his hero's life is veiled with shades ; and nothing is brought to view but the chief, the governor, the defender of England's honour, and the enlarger of her dominion. The act of violence by which he obtained the supreme power is lightly treated, and decently justified. It was certainly to be desired that the detestable band should be dissolved, which had destroyed the church, murdered the king, and filled the nation with tumult and oppression ; yet Cromwell had not the right of dissolving them, for all that he had before done could be justified only by supposing them invested with lawful authority. But combinations of wickedness  
would

would overwhelm the world by the advantage which licentious principles afford, did not those who have long practised perfidy, grow faithless to each other.

In the poem on the war with Spain, are some passages at least equal to the best parts of the panegyrick; and in the conclusion, the poet ventures yet a higher flight of flattery, by recommending royalty to Cromwell and the nation. Cromwell was very desirous, as appears from his conversation, related by Whitlock, of adding the title to the power of monarchy, and is supposed to have been with-held from it partly by fear of the army, and partly by fear of the laws, which, when he should govern by the name of king, would have restrained his authority. When therefore a deputation was solemnly sent to invite him to the Crown, he, after a long conference, refused it; but is said to have fainted in his coach, when he parted from them.

The poem on the death of the Protector seems to have been dictated by real veneration for his memory. Dryden and Sprat wrote on the same occasion; but they were young men,

men, struggling into notice, and hoping for some favour from the ruling party. Waller had little to expect: he had received nothing but his pardon from Cromwell, and was not likely to ask any thing from those who should succeed him.

Soon afterwards the Restauration supplied him with another subject; and he exerted his imagination, his elegance, and his melody, with equal alacrity, for Charles the Second. It is not possible to read, without some contempt and indignation, poems of the same author, ascribing the highest degree of *power and piety* to Charles the First; then transferring the same *power and piety* to Oliver Cromwell, now inviting Oliver to take the Crown; and then congratulating Charles the Second on his recovered right. Neither Cromwell nor Charles could value his testimony as the effect of conviction, or receive his praises as effusions of reverence; they could consider them but as the labour of invention, and the tribute of dependance.

Poets, indeed, profess fiction; but the legitimate end of fiction is the conveyance of truth;

truth; and he that has flattery ready for all whom the vicissitudes of the world happen to exalt, must be scorned as a prostituted mind, that may retain the glitter of wit, but has lost the dignity of virtue.

The Congratulation was considered as inferior in poetical merit to the Panegyrick; and it is reported, that when the king, told Waller of the disparity, he answered, "Poets, Sir, succeed better in fiction than in truth."

The Congratulation is indeed not inferior to the Panegyrick, either by decay of genius, or for want of diligence; but because Cromwell had done much, and Charles had done little. Cromwell wanted nothing to raise him to heroick excellence but virtue; and virtue his poet thought himself at liberty to supply. Charles had yet only the merit of struggling without success, and suffering without despair. A life of escapes and indigence could supply poetry with no splendid images.

In



In the first parliament summoned by Charles the Second (March 8, 1661), Waller sat for Hastings in Suffex, and served for different places in all the parliaments of that reign. In a time when fancy and gaiety were the most powerful recommendations to regard, it is not likely that Waller was forgotten. He passed his time in the company that was highest, both in rank and wit, from which even his obstinate sobriety did not exclude him. Though he drank water, he was enabled by his fertility of mind to heighten the mirth of Bacchanalian assemblies; and Mr. Saville said, that "no man in England  
" should keep him company without drink-  
" ing, but Ned Waller."

The praise given him by St. Evremond is a proof of his reputation; for it was only by his reputation that he could be known, as a writer, to a man who, though he lived a great part of a long life upon an English pension, never condescended to understand the language of the nation that maintained him.

In

In parliament, "he was," says Burnet, "the delight of the house, and though old said the liveliest things of any among them." This, however, is said in his account of the year seventy-five, when Waller was only seventy. His name as a speaker occurs often in Grey's Collections; but I have found no extracts that can be quoted as exhibiting any representation of abilities displayed rather in sallies of gaiety than cogency of argument.

He was of such consideration, that his remarks were circulated and recorded. When the duke of York's influence was high, both in Scotland and England, it drew, says Burnet, a lively reflection from Waller the celebrated wit. "He said, the house of commons had resolved that the duke should not reign after the king's death; but the king, in opposition to them, had resolved that he should reign even in his life." If there appear no extraordinary *liveliness* in this *remark*, yet its reception proves the speaker to have been a *celebrated wit*, to have had  
a name

a name which the men of wit were proud of mentioning.

He did not suffer his reputation to die gradually away, which may easily happen in a long life, but renewed his claim to poetical distinction from time to time, as occasions were offered, either by publick events or private incidents; and, contenting himself with the influence of his muse, or loving quiet better than influence, he never accepted any office of magistracy.

He was not, however, without some attention to his fortune; for he asked from the king (in 1665) the provostship of Eaton College, and obtained it; but Clarendon refused to put the seal to the grant, alleging that it could be held only by a clergyman. It is known that Sir Henry Wotton qualified himself for it by Deacon's orders.

To this opposition, the *Biographia* imputes the violence and acrimony with which Waller joined Buckingham's faction in the prosecution of Clarendon. The motive was illiberal and dishonest, and shewed that more

than sixty years had not been able to teach him morality. His accusation is such as conscience can hardly be supposed to dictate without the help of malice. "We were to  
" be governed by janizaries instead of par-  
" liaments, and are in danger from a worse  
" plot than that of the fifth of November ;  
" then, if the Lords and commons had been  
" destroyed, there had been a succession ;  
" but here both had been destroyed for ever."  
This is the language of a man who is glad of an opportunity to rail, and ready to sacrifice truth to interest at one time, and to anger at another.

A year after the Chancellor's banishment, another vacancy gave him encouragement for another petition, which the king referred to the council, who, after hearing the question argued by lawyers for three days, determined that the office could be held only by a clergyman, according to the act of uniformity, since the provosts had always received institution, as for a parsonage, from the bishops of Lincoln. The King then said, he could not break the law which he had made ; and Dr. Zachary Cradock, famous for a single  
6 sermon,

sermon, at most for two sermons, was chosen by the Fellows.

That he asked any thing else is not known; it is certain that he obtained nothing, though he continued obsequious to the court through the rest of Charles's reign.

At the accession of King James (in 1685) he was chosen for parliament, being then fourscore, at Saltash in Cornwall; and wrote a *Presage of the Downfall of the Turkish Empire*, which he presented to the king on his birthday. It is remarked, by his commentator Fenton, that in reading Tasso he had early imbibed a veneration for the heroes of the Holy War, and a zealous enmity to the Turks, which never left him. James, however, having soon after begun what he thought a holy war at home, made haste to put all molestation of the Turks out of his power.

James treated him with kindness and familiarity, of which instances are given by the writer of his Life. One day, taking him into the closet, the King asked him how he liked one of the pictures: "My eyes," said

Waller, "are dim, and I do not know it." The king said, it was the princess of Orange. "She is," said Waller, "like the greatest woman in the world." The King asked who was that; and was answered, Queen Elizabeth. "I wonder," said the King, "you should think so; but I must confess she had a wise council." "And, Sir, said Waller, did you ever know a fool chuse a wise one?" Such is the story, which I once heard of some other man. Pointed axioms, and acute replies, fly loose about the world, and are assigned successively to those whom it may be the fashion to celebrate.

When the king knew that he was about to marry his daughter to Dr. Birch, a clergyman, he ordered a French gentleman to tell him, that "the King wondered he could think of marrying his daughter to a falling church." "The King," says Waller, "does me great honour, in taking notice of my domestick affairs; but I have lived long enough to observe that this falling church has got a trick of rising again."

He

He took notice to his friends of the King's conduct ; and said, that " he would be left " like a whale upon the strand." Whether he was privy to any of the transactions which ended in the Revolution, is not known. His heir joined the prince of Orange.

Having now attained an age beyond which the laws of nature seldom suffer life to be extended, otherwise than by a future state, he seems to have turned his mind upon preparation for the decisive hour, and therefore consecrated his poetry to devotion. It is pleasing to discover that his piety was without weakness ; that his intellectual powers continued vigorous ; and that the lines which he composed when *he, for age, could neither read nor write*, are not inferior to the effusions of his youth.

Towards the decline of life, he bought a small house, with a little land, at Colshill ; and said, " he should be glad to die, like the " stag, where he was roused." This, however, did not happen. When he was at Beaconsfield, he found his legs grow tumid ;

he went to Windsor, where Sir Charles Scarborough then attended the king, and requested him, as both a friend and a physician, to tell him, *what that swelling meant*. "Sir," answered Scarborough, "your blood will run no longer." Waller repeated some lines of Virgil, and went home to die.

As the disease increased upon him, he composed himself for his departure; and calling upon Dr. Birch to give him the holy sacrament, he desired his children to take it with him, and made an earnest declaration of his faith in Christianity. It now appeared, what part of his conversation with the great could be remembered with delight. He related, that being present when the duke of Buckingham talked profanely before King Charles, he said to him, "My Lord, I am  
" a great deal older than your grace, and  
" have, I believe, heard more arguments for  
" atheism than ever your grace did; but I  
" have lived long enough to see there is  
" nothing in them; and so, I hope, your  
" grace will."

He



He died October 21, 1687, and was buried at Beaconsfield, with a monument erected by his son's executors, for which Rymer wrote the inscription, and which I hope is now rescued from dilapidation.

He left several children by his second wife; of whom, his daughter was married to Dr. Birch. Benjamin, the eldest son, was disinherited, and sent to New Jersey, as wanting common understanding. Edmund, the second son, inherited the estate, and represented Agmondesham in parliament, but at last turned Quaker. William, the third son, was a merchant in London. Stephen, the fourth, was an eminent Doctor of Laws, and one of the Commissioners for the Union. There is said to have been a fifth, of whom no account has descended.

The character of Waller, both moral and intellectual, has been drawn by Clarendon, to whom he was familiarly known, with nicety, which certainly none to whom he was not known can presume to emulate. It is therefore inserted here, with such remarks

as others have supplied ; after which, nothing remains but a critical examination of his poetry,

“ Edmund Waller,” says Clarendon, “ was  
 “ born to a very fair estate, by the parcimony,  
 “ or frugality, of a wise father and mother :  
 “ and he thought it so commendable an advantage,  
 “ that he resolved to improve it with  
 “ his utmost care, upon which in his nature  
 “ he was too much intent ; and, in order to  
 “ that, he was so much reserved and retired,  
 “ that he was scarce ever heard of, till by his  
 “ address and dexterity he had gotten a very  
 “ rich wife in the city, against all the recommendation  
 “ and countenance and authority of the Court, which was thoroughly  
 “ engaged on the behalf of Mr. Crofts ; and  
 “ which used to be successful in that age,  
 “ against any opposition. He had the good  
 “ fortune to have an alliance and friendship  
 “ with Dr. Morley, who had assisted and instructed  
 “ him in the reading many good books, to which his natural parts and  
 “ promptitude inclined him, especially the  
 “ poets ; and at the age when other men  
 “ used to give over writing verses (for he was  
 “ near

“ near thirty years when he first engaged  
 “ himself in that exercise; at least, that he  
 “ was known to do so), he surprised the  
 “ town with two or three pieces of that  
 “ kind; as if a tenth Muse had been newly  
 “ born, to cherish drooping poetry. The  
 “ Doctor at that time brought him into that  
 “ company, which was most celebrated for  
 “ good conversation; where he was received  
 “ and esteemed, with great applause and re-  
 “ spect. He was a very pleasant discourser,  
 “ in earnest and in jest, and therefore very  
 “ grateful to all kind of company, where he  
 “ was not the less esteemed for being very  
 “ rich.

“ He had been even nursed in parliaments,  
 “ where he sat when he was very young;  
 “ and so, when they were resumed again (af-  
 “ ter a long intermission), he appeared in  
 “ those assemblies with great advantage;  
 “ having a graceful way of speaking, and by  
 “ thinking much on several arguments (which  
 “ his temper and complexion, that had much  
 “ of melancholic, inclined him to), he seemed  
 “ often to speak upon the sudden, when the  
 “ occasion had only administered the opportu-  
 “ nity

“ nity of saying what he had thoroughly con-  
“ sidered, which gave a great lustre to all he  
“ said; which yet was rather of delight than  
“ weight. There needs no more be said to  
“ extol the excellence and power of his wit,  
“ and pleasantness of his conversation, than  
“ that it was of magnitude enough to cover  
“ a world of very great faults; that is, so to  
“ cover them, that they were not taken no-  
“ tice of to his reproach; viz. a narrowness  
“ in his nature to the lowest degree; an ab-  
“ jectness and want of courage to support him  
“ in any virtuous undertaking; an insinua-  
“ tion and servile flattery to the height, the  
“ vaineft and most imperious nature could be  
“ contented with; that it preserved and won  
“ his life from those who were most resolved  
“ to take it, and in an occasion in which he  
“ ought to have been ambitious to have lost  
“ it; and then preserved him again, from  
“ the reproach and contempt that was due  
“ to him, for so preserving it, and for vindi-  
“ cating it at such a price; that it had power  
“ to reconcile him to those, whom he had  
“ most offended and provoked; and conti-  
“ nued to his age with that rare felicity, that  
“ his company was acceptable, where his  
“ spirit

“ spirit was odious; and he was at least pitied, where he was most detested.”

Such is the account of Clarendon; on which it may not be improper to make some remarks.

“ He was very little known till he had obtained a rich wife in the city.”

He obtained the rich wife about the age of three-and-twenty; an age before which few men are conspicuous much to their advantage. He was known, however, in parliament and at court; and, if he spent part of his time in privacy, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he intended the improvement of his mind as well as of his fortune.

That Clarendon might misjudge the motive of his retirement is the more probable, because he has evidently mistaken the commencement of his poetry, which he supposes him not to have attempted before thirty. As his first pieces were perhaps not printed, the succession of his compositions was not known; and Clarendon, who cannot be imagined to have been very studious of poetry, did not rectify

rectify his first opinion by consulting Waller's book.

Clarendon observes, that he was introduced to the wits of the age by Dr. Morley; but the writer of his Life relates that he was already among them, when, hearing a noise in the street, and enquiring the cause, they found a son of Ben Jonson under an arrest. This was Morley, whom Waller set free at the expence of one hundred pounds, took him into the country as director of his studies, and then procured him admission into the company of the friends of literature. Of this fact, Clarendon had a nearer knowledge than the biographer, and is therefore more to be credited.

The account of Waller's parliamentary eloquence is seconded by Burnet, who, though he calls him "the delight of the house," adds, that "he was only concerned to say that, which should make him be applauded, he never laid the business of the House to heart, being a vain and empty though a witty man."

Of

Of his insinuation and flattery it is not unreasonable to believe that the truth is told. Ascham, in his elegant description of those whom in modern language we term Wits, *descrip* says, that they are *open flatterers, and privy* *tion of* *mockers.* Waller shewed a little of both, *wits* when, upon sight of the Dutchess of Newcastle's verses on the death of a Stag, he declared that he would give all his own compositions to have written them; and, being charged with the exorbitance of his adulation, answered, that "nothing was too much to be given, that a Lady might be saved from the disgrace of such a vile performance." This, however, was no very mischievous or very unusual deviation from truth: had his hypocrisy been confined to such transactions, he might have been forgiven, though not praised; for who forbears to flatter an author or a lady?

Of the laxity of his political principles, and the weakness of his resolution, he experienced the natural effect, by losing the esteem of every party. From Cromwell he had only his recall; and from Charles the  
Second,

Second, who delighted in his company, he obtained only the pardon of his relation Hampden, and the safety of Hampden's son.

As far as conjecture can be made from the whole of his writing, and his conduct, he was habitually and deliberately a friend to monarchy. His deviation towards democracy proceeded from his connection with Hampden, for whose sake he prosecuted Crawley with great bitterness; and the invective which he pronounced on that occasion was so popular, that twenty thousand copies are said by his biographer to have been sold in one day.

It is confessed that his faults still left him many friends, at least many companions. His convivial power of pleasing is universally acknowledged; but those who conversed with him intimately, found him not only passionate, especially in his old age, but resentful; so that the interposition of friends was sometimes necessary.

His wit and his poetry naturally connected him with the polite writers of his time: he was joined with Lord Buckhurst in the translation  
iation



lation of Corneille's Pompey; and is said to have added his help to that of Cowley in the original draught of the Rehearsal.

The care of his fortune, which Clarendon imputes to him in a degree little less than criminal, was either not constant or not successful; for, having inherited a patrimony of three thousand five hundred a year in the time of James the First, and augmented it at least by one wealthy marriage, he left, about the time of the Revolution, an income of not more than twelve or thirteen hundred; which, when the different value of money is reckoned, will be found perhaps not more than a fourth part of what he once possessed.

Of this diminution, part was the consequence of the gifts which he was forced to scatter, and the fine which he was condemned to pay at the detection of his plot; and if his estate, as is related in his Life, was sequestered, he had probably contracted debts when he lived in exile; for we are told that at Paris he lived in splendor, and was the only Englishman, except the Lord St. Albans, that kept a table.

• His

His unlucky plot compelled him to sell a thousand a year; of the waste of the rest there is no account, except that he is confessed by his biographer to have been a bad œconomist. He seems to have deviated from the common practice; to have been a hoarder in his first years, and a squanderer in his last.

Of his course of studies, or choice of books, nothing is known more than that he professed himself unable to read Chapman's translation of Homer without rapture. His opinion concerning the duty of a poet is contained in his declaration, that " he would blot from his works any line that did not contain some motive to virtue."

THE characters, by which Waller intended to distinguish his writings, are spriteness and dignity ; in his smaller pieces, he endeavours to be gay ; in the larger, to be great. Of his airy and light productions, the chief source is gallantry, that attentive reverence of female excellence, which has descended to us from the Gothic ages. As his poems are commonly occasional, and his addresses personal, he was not so liberally supplied with grand as with soft images ; for beauty is more easily found than magnanimity.

The delicacy, which he cultivated, restrains him to a certain nicety and caution, even when he writes upon the slightest matter. He has therefore in his whole volume nothing burlesque, and seldom any thing ludicrous or familiar. He seems always to do his best ; though his subjects are often unworthy of his care. It is not easy to think without some contempt on an author, who is growing illustrious in his own opinion by verses, at one time, “ To a Lady, who can

“do any thing, but sleep, when she pleases.”  
 At another, “To a Lady, who can sleep,  
 “when she pleases.” Now, “To a Lady,  
 “on her passing through a crowd of people.”  
 Then, “On a braid of divers colours woven  
 “by four fair Ladies:” “On a tree cut in  
 “paper:” or, “To a Lady, from whom  
 “he received the copy of verses on the  
 “paper-tree, which for many years had been  
 “missing.”

Genius now and then produces a lucky  
 trifle. We still read the *Dove* of Anacreon,  
 and *Sparrow* of Catullus; and a writer nat-  
 urally pleases himself with a performance,  
 which owes nothing to the subject. But com-  
 positions merely pretty have the fate of other  
 pretty things, and are quitted in time for  
 something useful: they are flowers fragrant  
 and fair, but of short duration; or they are  
 blossoms to be valued only as they foretell  
 fruits.

Among Waller's little poems are some,  
 which their excellency ought to secure from  
 oblivion; as, *To Amoret*, comparing the  
 different modes of regard with which he  
 looks

True in  
 way  
 ins  
 true

looks on her and *Sacharissa*; and the verses  
*On Love*, that begin, *Anger in hasty Words or*  
*Blows*.

In others he is not equally successful;  
 sometimes his thoughts are deficient, and  
 sometimes his expression.

The numbers are not always musical; as,

Fair Venus, in thy soft arms .  
 The god of rage confine;  
 For thy whispers are the charms  
 Which only can divert his fierce design.  
 What though he frown, and to tumult do  
 incline;  
 Thou the flame  
 Kindled in his breast canst tame;  
 With that snow which unmelted lies on thine.

He seldom indeed fetches an amorous sentiment from the depths of science; his thoughts are for the most part easily understood, and his images such as the superficies of nature readily supplies; he has a just claim to popularity, because he writes to common degrees of knowledge, and is free at least from philosophical pedantry, unless perhaps

the end of a song *to the Sun* may be excepted, in which he is too much a Copernican. To which may be added, the simile of the *Palm* in the verses *on her passing through a crowd*; and a line in a more serious poem on the *Restoration*, about vipers and treacle, which can only be understood by those who happen to know the composition of the *Theriaca*.

His thoughts are sometimes hyperbolical, and his images unnatural :

——The plants admire,  
No less than those of old did Orpheus' lyre;  
If she sit down, with tops all tow'rd her bow'd;  
They round about her into arbours crowd:  
Or if she walks, in even ranks they stand,  
Like some well-marshal'd and obsequious band.

In another place :

While in the park I sing, the listening deer  
Attend my passion, and forget to fear:  
When to the beeches I report my flame,  
They bow their heads, as if they felt the same:  
To gods appealing, when I reach their bowers,  
With loud complaints they answer me in showers.  
To thee a wild and cruel soul is given,  
More deaf than trees, and prouder than the  
heaven!

On

On the head of a Stag :

O fertile head ! which every year  
Could such a crop of wonder bear !  
The teeming earth did never bring  
So soon, so hard, so huge a thing :  
Which might it never have been cast,  
Each year's growth added to the last,  
These lofty branches had supply'd  
The Earth's bold sons prodigious pride :  
Heaven with these engines had been seal'd,  
When mountains heap'd on mountains fail'd.

Sometimes, having succeeded in the first part, he makes a feeble conclusion. In the song of "Sacharissa's and Amoret's Friend-ship," the two last stanzas ought to have been omitted.

His images of gallantry are not always in the highest degree delicate.

Then shall my love this doubt displace,  
And gain such trust, that I may come  
And banquet sometimes on thy face,  
But make my constant meals at home.

Some applications may be thought too remote and unconfidential; as in the verses on the *Lady dancing* :

The fun in figures such as these,  
Joys with the moon to play :  
To the sweet strains they advance,  
Which do result from their own spheres ;  
As this nymph's dance  
Moves with the numbers which she hears.

Sometimes a thought, which might perhaps fill a distich, is expanded and attenuated, till it grows weak and almost evanescent.

Chloris ! since first our calm of peace  
Was frighted hence, this good we find,  
Your favours with your fears increase,  
And growing mischiefs make you kind.  
So the fair tree, which still preserves  
Her fruit, and state, while no wind blows,  
In storms from that uprightness swerves ;  
And the glad earth about her strows  
With treasure from her yielding boughs.

His images are not always distinct; as, in the following passage, he confounds *Love* as a person with *love* as a passion :

Some



Some other nymphs, with colours faint,  
 And pencil flow, may Cupid paint,  
 And a weak heart in time destroy ;  
 She has a stamp, and prints the Boy :  
 Can, with a single look, inflame  
 The coldest breast, the rudest tame.

His sallies of casual flattery are sometimes elegant and happy, as that *in return for the Silver Pen* ; and sometimes empty and trifling, as that *upon the Card torn by the Queen*. There are a few lines *written in the Dutcheſs's Taſſo*, which he is ſaid by Fenton to have kept a ſummer under correction. It happened to Waller, as to others, that his ſucceſs was not always in proportion to his labour,

Of theſe petty compositions, neither the beauties nor the faults deſerve much attention. The amorous verſes have this to recommend them, that they are leſs hyperbolical than thoſe of ſome other poets. Waller is not always at the laſt gasp ; he does not die of a frown, nor live upon a ſmile. There is how- ever too much love, and too many trifles. Little things are made too important ; and the Empire of Beauty is repreſented as exert-

D d 4

ing

ing its influence further than can be allowed by the multiplicity of human passions, and the variety of human wants. Such books therefore may be considered as shewing the world under a false appearance, and, so far as they obtain credit from the young and unexperienced, as misleading expectation, and misguiding practice.

Of his nobler and more weighty performances, the greater part is panegyrical; for of praise he was very lavish, as is observed by his imitator, Lord Lansdown :

No satyr stalks within the hallow'd ground,	}
But queens and heroines, kings and gods	
abound ;	
Glory and arms and love are all the sound.	

In the first poem, on the danger of the Prince on the coast of Spain, there is a puerile and ridiculous mention of Arion at the beginning ; and the last paragraph, on the *Cable*, is in part ridiculously mean, and in part ridiculously tumid. The poem, however, is such as may be justly praised, without much allowance for the state of our poetry and language at that time.

The

The two next poems are upon the King's *behaviour at the death of Buckingham*, and upon his *Navy*.

He has, in the first, used the pagan deities with great propriety :

'Twas want of such a precedent as this  
Made the old heathen frame their gods amiss.

In the poem on the Navy, those lines are very noble, which suppose the King's power secure against a second Deluge ; so noble, that it were almost criminal to remark the mistake of *centre* for *surface*, or to say that the empire of the sea would be worth little if it were not that the waters terminate in land.

The poem upon Sallee has forcible sentiments ; but the conclusion is feeble. That on the Repairs of St. Paul's has something vulgar and obvious ; such as the mention of Amphion ; and something violent and harsh, as

So

So all our minds with his conspire to grace  
 The Gentiles' great apostle, and deface  
 Those state-obscuring sheds, that like a chain  
 Seem'd to confine, and fetter him again :  
 Which the glad faint shakes off at his command,  
 As once the viper from his sacred hand.  
 So joys the aged oak, when we divide  
 The creeping ivy from his injur'd side.

Of the two last couplets, the first is extravagant, and the second mean.

His praise of the Queen is too much exaggerated; and the thought, that she "saves  
 "lovers, by cutting off hope, as gangrenes  
 "are cured by lopping the limb," presents  
 nothing to the mind but disgust and horror,

Of the *Battle of the Summer Islands*, it seems not easy to say whether it is intended to raise terror or merriment. The beginning is too splendid for jest, and the conclusion too light for seriousness. The versification is studied, the scenes are diligently displayed, and the images artfully amplified; but as it ends neither in joy nor sorrow, it will scarcely be read a second time.

The

The *Panegyrick* upon Cromwell has obtained from the publick a very liberal dividend of praise, which however cannot be said to have been unjustly lavished; for such a series of verses had rarely appeared before in the English language. Of the lines some are grand, some are graceful, and all are musical. There is now and then a feeble verse, or a trifling thought; but its great fault is the choice of its hero.

The poem of *The War with Spain* begins with lines more vigorous and striking than Waller is accustomed to produce. The succeeding parts are variegated with better passages and worse. There is something too far-fetched in the comparison of the Spaniards drawing the English on, by saluting St. Lucar with cannon, *to lambs awakening the lion by bleating*. The fate of the Marquis and his Lady, who were burnt in their ship, would have moved more, had the poet not made him die like the Phoenix, because he had spices about him, nor expressed their affection and their end by a conceit at once false and vulgar:

Alive,

Alive, in equal flames of love they burn'd,  
And now together are to ashes turn'd,

The verses to Charles, on his Return, were doubtless intended to counterbalance the panegyric on Cromwell. If it has been thought inferior to that with which it is naturally compared, the cause of its deficiency has been already remarked,

The remaining pieces it is not necessary to examine singly. They must be supposed to have faults and beauties of the same kind with the rest. The Sacred Poems, however, deserve particular regard; they were the work of Waller's declining life, of those hours in which he looked upon the fame and the folly of the time past with the sentiments which his great predecessor Petrarch bequeathed to posterity, upon his review of that love and poetry which have given him immortality.

That natural jealousy which makes every man unwilling to allow much excellence in another, always produces a disposition to believe  
that

that the mind grows old with the body ; and that he, whom we are now forced to confess superior, is hastening daily to a level with ourselves. By delighting to think this of the living, we learn to think it of the dead ; and Fenton, with all his kindness for Waller, has the luck to mark the exact time when his genius passed the zenith, which he places at his fifty-fifth year. This is to allot the mind but a small portion. Intellectual decay is doubtless not uncommon ; but it seems not to be universal. Newton was in his eighty-fifth year improving his Chronology, a few days before his death ; and Waller appears not, in my opinion, to have lost at eighty-two any part of his poetical power.

His Sacred Poems do not please like some of his other works ; but before the fatal fifty-five, had he written on the same subjects, his success would hardly have been better.

It has been the frequent lamentation of good men, that verse has been too little applied to the purposes of worship, and many attempts have been made to animate devotion by pious poetry ; that they have very seldom attained

attained their end is sufficiently known, and it may not be improper to enquire why they have miscarried.

Let no pious ear be offended if I advance, in opposition to many authorities; that poetical devotion cannot often please. The doctrines of religion may indeed be defended in a didactic poem; and he who has the happy power of arguing in verse, will not lose it because his subject is sacred. A poet may describe the beauty and the grandeur of Nature, the flowers of the spring, and the harvests of Autumn, the vicissitudes of the Tide, and the revolutions of the Sky, and praise the Maker for his works in lines which no reader shall lay aside. The subject of the disputation is not piety, but the motives to piety; that of the description is not God, but the works of God.

Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.



The essence of poetry is invention ; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights. The topics of devotion are few, and being few are universally known ; but, few as they are, they can be made no more ; they can receive no grace from novelty of sentiment, and very little from novelty of expression.

*reasons  
Why  
Poetical  
devotion  
cannot  
please*

Poetry pleases by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than things themselves afford. This effect proceeds from the display of those parts of nature which attract, and the concealment of those which repel the imagination : but religion must be shewn as it is ; suppression and addition equally corrupt it ; and such as it is, it is known already.

From poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension and elevation of his fancy ; but this is rarely to be hoped by Christians from metrical devotion. Whatever is great, desirable, or tremendous, is comprised in the name of the Supreme Being. Omnipotence cannot be exalted ; Infinity

nity cannot be amplified; Perfection cannot be improved.

The employments of pious meditation are Faith, Thanksgiving, Repentance, and Supplication. Faith, invariably uniform, cannot be invested by fancy with decorations. Thanksgiving, the most joyful of all holy effusions, yet addressed to a Being without passions, is confined to a few modes, and is to be felt rather than expressed. Repentance trembling in the presence of the judge, is not at leisure for cadences and epithets. Supplication of man to man may diffuse itself though many topicks of persuasion; but supplication to God can only cry for mercy.

Of sentiments purely religious, it will be found that the most simple expression is the most sublime. Poetry loses its lustre and its power, because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself. All that verse can do is to help the memory, and delight the ear, and for these purposes it may be very useful; but it supplies nothing to the mind. The ideas of Chris-

tian Theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestick for ornament; to recommend them by tropes and figures, is to magnify by a concave mirror the sidereal hemisphere.

*indisputable  
here*

As much of Waller's reputation was owed to the softness and smoothness of his Numbers; it is proper to consider those minute particulars to which a versifyer must attend.

He certainly very much excelled in smoothness most of the writers who were living when his poetry commenced. The Poets of Elizabeth had attained an art of modulation, which was afterwards neglected or forgotten. Fairfax was acknowledged by him as his model; and he might have studied with advantage the poem of Davies, which, though merely philosophical, yet seldom leaves the ear ungratified.

But he was rather smooth than strong; of *the full resounding line*, which Pope attributes to Dryden, he has given very few examples. The critical decision has given the praise of

strength to Denham, and of sweetness to Waller.

His excellence of versification has some abatements. He uses the expletive *do* very frequently; and though he used to see it almost universally ejected, was not more careful to avoid it in his last compositions than in his first. Praise had given him confidence; and finding the world satisfied, he satisfied himself.

His rhymes are sometimes weak words: *so* is found to make the rhyme twice in ten lines, and occurs often as a rhyme through his book.

His double rhymes, in heroick verse, have been censured by Mrs. Phillips, who was his rival in the translation of Corneille's Pompey; and more faults might be found, were not the enquiry below attention.

He sometimes uses the obsolete termination of verbs, as *waxeth*, *afflicteth*; and sometimes retains the final syllable of the preterite, as *amazed*, *supposed*; of which I know not whether

ther it is not to the detriment of our language that we have totally rejected them.

Of triplets he is sparing; but he did not wholly forbear them: of an Alexandrine he has given no example.

The general character of his poetry is elegance and gaiety. He is never pathetick, and very rarely sublime. He seems neither to have had a mind much elevated by nature, nor amplified by learning. His thoughts are such as a liberal conversation and large acquaintance with life would easily supply. They had however then, perhaps, that grace of novelty, which they are now often supposed to want by those who, having already found them in later books, do not know or enquire who produced them first. This treatment is unjust. Let not the original author lose by his imitators.

Praise however should be due before it is given. The author of Waller's Life ascribes to him the first practice, of what Erythræus and some late critics call *Alliteration*, of using in the same verse many words

E c 2 begin-

beginning with the same letter. But this knack, whatever be its value, was so frequent among early writers, that Gascoign, a writer of the sixteenth century, warns the young poet against affecting it; and Shakspeare in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* is supposed to ridicule it.

He borrows too many of his sentiments and illustrations from the old Mythology, for which it is vain to plead the example of ancient poets: the deities which they introduced so frequently, were considered as realities, so far as to be received by the imagination, whatever sober reason might even then determine. But of these images time has tarnished the splendor. A fiction, not only detected but despised, can never afford a solid basis to any position, though sometimes it may furnish a transient allusion, or slight illustration. No modern monarch can be much exalted by hearing that, as Hercules had had his *club*, he has his *navy*.

But of the praise of Waller, though much may be taken away, much will remain; for it cannot be denied that he added something

to our elegance of diction, and something to our propriety of thought ; and to him may be applied what Tasso said, with equal spirit and justice, of himself and Guarini, when, having perused the *Pastor Fido*, he cried out, “ If he had not read *Aminta*, he had not excelled it.”

---

AS Waller professed himself to have learned the art of versification from Fairfax, it has been thought proper to subjoin a specimen of his work, which, after Mr. Hoole’s translation, will perhaps not be soon reprinted. By knowing the state in which Waller found our poetry, the reader may judge how much he improved it.

## I.

*Erminiaes* steed (this while) his mistress bore  
Through forrests thicke among the shadie treene,  
Her feeble hand the bridle raines forlore,  
Halfe in a swoone she was for feare I weene ;  
But her sit courser spared nere the more,  
To beare her through the desert woods unseene  
Of her strong foes, that chas’d her through the  
plaine,

And still pursu’d, but still pursu’d in vaine.

## 2.

Like as the wearie hounds at last retire,  
 Windlesse, displeased, from the fruitlesse chace,  
 When the slie beast Tapisht in bush and brire,  
 No art nor paines can rowse out of his place :  
 The Christian knights so full of shame and ire  
 Returned backe, with faint and wearie pace !

Yet still the fearefull Dame fled, swift as winde,  
 Nor euer staid, nor euer lookt behinde.

## 3.

Through thicke and thinne, all night, all day, she  
 driued,

Withouten comfort, companie or guide,  
 Her plaints and teares with euery thought reuiued,  
 She heard and saw her greefes, but nought beside.  
 But when the sunne his burning chariot diued  
 In *Tbetis* waue, and wearie teame vntide,

On Iordans sandie banks her course she staid,  
 At last, there downe she light, and downe she  
 laid,

## 4.

Her teares, her drinke ; her food, her sorrowings,  
 This was her diet that unhappie night ;  
 But sleepe (that sweet repose and quiet brings)  
 To ease the greefes of discontented wight,  
 Spred forth his tender, soft, and nimble wings,  
 In his dull armes foulding the virgin bright ;  
 And loue, his mother, and the graces kept  
 Strong watch and warde, while this faire Ladie  
 slept.

## 5. The



## 5.

The birds awakte her with their morning song,  
 Their warbling musicke pearst her tender care,  
 The murmuring brookes and whistling windes  
     among  
 The ratling boughes, and leaues, their parts did  
     beare;  
 Her eies vnclos'd beheld the groues along  
 Of swaines and shepherd groomes, that dwellings  
     weare;  
 And that sweet noise, birds, winds, and waters  
     sent,  
 Prouokte againe the virgin to lament.

## 6.

Her plaints were interrupted with a sound,  
 That seem'd from thickest bushes to proceed,  
 Some iolly shepherd sung a lustie round,  
 And to his voice had tun'd his oaten reed;  
 Thither she went, an old man there she found,  
 (At whose right hand his little flocke did feed)  
     Sat making baskets, his three sonnes among,  
     That learn'd their fathers art, and learn'd his  
     song.

## 7.

Beholding one in shining armes appeare  
 The feelie man and his were fore dismaid;  
 But sweet *Erminia* comforted their feare,  
 Her ventall vp, her visage open laid,

You happie folke, of heau'n beloued deare,  
 Worke on (quoth she) vpon your harmlesse traid,  
 These dreadfull armes I beare no warfare bring  
 To your sweet toile, nor those sweet tunes you  
 sing.

## 8.

But father, since this land, these townes and  
 towres,  
 Destroied are with sword, with fire and spoile,  
 How may it be unhurt, that you and yours  
 In safetie thus, applie your harmlesse toile?  
 My sonne (quoth he) this poore estate of ours  
 Is euer safe from storme of warlike broile;  
 This wildernesse doth vs in safetie keepe,  
 No thundring drum, no trumpet breakes our  
 sleepe.

## 9.

Haply iust heau'ns defence and shield of right,  
 Doth loue the innocence of simple swaines,  
 The thunderbolts on highest mountaines light,  
 And feld or neuer strike the lower plaines:  
 So kings haue cause to feare *Bellonaes* might,  
 Not they whose sweat and toile their dinner gaines,  
 Nor ever greedie soldier was entised  
 By pouertie, neglected and despised;

## 10.

O pouertie, chefe of the heau'nly brood,  
Dearer to me than wealth or kingly crowne !  
No wifh for honour, thirft of others good,  
Can moue my hart, contented with mine owne :  
We quench our thirft with water of this flood,  
Nor feare we poison fhould therein be throwne :  
    Thefe little flocks of fheepe and tender goates  
    Giue milke for food, and wooll to make us  
    coates.

## 11.

We little wifh, we need but little wealth,  
From cold and hunger vs to cloath and feed ;  
Thefe are my fonnes, their care preferues from  
    ftealth  
Their fathers flocks, nor feruants moe I need :  
Amid thefe groues I walke oft for my health,  
And to the fifhes, birds and beaftes giue heed,  
    How they are fed, in forreft, fpring and lake,  
And their contentment for enfample take.

## 12.

Time was (for each one hath his doting time,  
Thefe filuer locks were golden trefles than)  
That countrie life I hated as a crime,  
And from the forrefts fweet contentment ran,  
To Memphis ftately pallace would I clime,  
And there became the mightie Caliphes man,  
And though I but a fimple gardner weare,  
Yet could I marke abufes, fee and heare.

13. En-

## 13.

Entised on with hope of future gaine,  
I suffred long what did my soule displease ;  
But when my youth was spent, my hope was vaine,  
I felt my native strength at last decrease ;  
I gan my losse of lustie yeeres complaine,  
And wisht I had enjoy'd the countries peace ;  
I bod the court farewell, and with content  
My later age here have I quiet spent.

## 14.

While thus he spake, *Erminia* husht and still  
His wife discourses heard, with great attention,  
His speeches graue those idle fancies kill,  
Which in her troubled soule bred such dissention ;  
After much thought reformed was her will,  
Within those woods to dwell was her intention,  
Till fortune should occasion new afford,  
To turne her home to her desired Lord.

## 15.

She said therefore, O shepherd fortunate !  
That troubles some didst whilom feele and proue,  
Yet liuest now in this contented state,  
Let my mishap thy thoughts to pitie moue,  
To entertaine me as a willing mate  
In shepherds life, which I admire and loue ;  
Within these pleasant groues perchance my hart,  
Of her discomforts, may vnload some part.

## 16. If

## 16.

If gold or wealth of most esteemed deare,  
If iewels rich, thou diddest hold in prise,  
Such store thereof, such plentie haue I seen,  
As to a greedie minde might well suffice :  
With that downe trickled many a filuer teare,  
Two christall streames fell from her watrie eies ;  
Part of her sad misfortunes than she told,  
And wept, and with her wept that shepherd old.

## 17.

With speeches kinde, he gan the virgin deare  
Towards his cottage gently home to guide ;  
His aged wife there made her homely cheare,  
Yet welcomde her, and plast her by her side.  
The Princeesse dond a poore pastoraes geare,  
A kerchiefe course vpon her head she tide ;  
But yet her gestures and her lookes (I gesse)  
Were such, as ill beseem'd a shepherdesse.

## 18.

Not those rude garments could obscure, and hide,  
The heau'nly beautie of her angels face,  
Nor was her princely ofspring damnifide,  
Or ought disparag'de, by those labours bace ;  
Her little flocks to pasture would she guide,  
And milke her goates, and in their folds them  
place,  
Both cheefe and butter could she make, and frame  
Her selfe to please the shepherd and his dame.



---

P O M F R E T.

---





---



---

## P O M F R E T.

**O**F Mr. JOHN POMFRET nothing is known but from a slight and confused account prefixed to his poems by a nameless friend; who relates, that he was the son of the Rev. Mr. Pomfret, rector of Luton in Bedfordshire; that he was bred at Cambridge, entered into orders, and was rector of Malden in Bedfordshire, and might have risen in the Church; but that, when he applied to Dr. Compton, bishop of London, for institution to a living of considerable value, to which he had been presented, he found a troublesome obstruction raised by a malicious interpretation of some passage in his *Choice*; from which it was inferred, that he considered happiness as more likely to be found in the company of a mistress than of a wife.

This reproach was easily obliterated: for it had happened to Pomfret as to almost all other men who plan schemes of life; he had departed from his purpose, and was then married.

The

The malice of his enemies had however a very fatal consequence: the delay constrained his attendance in London, where he caught the small-pox, and died in 1703, in the thirty-sixth year of his age.

He published his poems in 1699; and has been always the favourite of that class of readers, who, without vanity or criticism, seek only their own amusement.

His *Choice* exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions, and equal to common expectations; such a state as affords plenty and tranquillity, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures. Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's *Choice*.

In his other poems there is an easy volubility; the pleasure of smooth metre is afforded to the ear, and the mind is not oppressed with ponderous or entangled with intricate sentiment. He pleases many, and he who pleases many must have merit.

DORSET.

---

D O R S E T.

---

Vol. I.

F f



---

## D O R S E T.

**O**F the Earl of Dorset the character has been drawn so largely and so elegantly by Prior, to whom he was familiarly known, that nothing can be added by a casual hand ; and, as it has appeared in one of the volumes of the late collection, it would be useless officiousness to transcribe it,

Charles Sackville was born January 24, 1637. Having been educated under a private tutor, he travelled into Italy, and returned a little before the Restoration. He was chosen into the first parliament that was called, for East Grinstead in Suffex, and soon became a favourite of Charles the Second ; but undertook no publick employment, being too eager of the riotous and licentious pleasures

which young men of high rank, who aspired to be thought wits, at that time imagined themselves intitled to indulge.

One of these frolicks has, by the industry of Wood, come down to posterity. Sackville, who was then Lord Buckhurst, with Sir Charles Sedley and Sir Thomas Ogle, got drunk at the Cock in Bow-street by Covent-garden, and, going into the balcony, exposed themselves to the populace in very indecent postures. At last, as they grew warmer, Sedley stood forth naked, and harangued the populace in such profane language, that the publick indignation was awakened; the crowd attempted to force the door, and, being repulsed, drove in the performers with stones, and broke the windows of the house.

For this misdemeanour they were indicted, and Sedley was fined five hundred pounds: what was the sentence of the others is not known. Sedley employed Killigrew and another to procure a remission from the king; but (mark the friendship of the dissolute!) they begged the fine for themselves, and exacted it to the last groat.

In

In 1665, Lord Buckhurst attended the Duke of York as a volunteer in the Dutch war; and was in the battle of June 3, when eighteen great Dutch ships were taken, and fourteen others destroyed; and Opdam the admiral, who engaged the Duke, was blown up beside him, with all his crew.

On the day before the battle, he is said to have composed the celebrated song, *To all you Ladies now at land*, with equal tranquillity of mind and promptitude of wit. Seldom any splendid story is wholly true. I have heard from the late Earl of Orrery, who was likely to have good hereditary intelligence, that Lord Buckhurst had been a week employed upon it, and only retouched or finished it on the memorable evening. But even this, whatever it may substract from his facility, leaves him his courage.

He was soon after made a gentleman of the bedchamber, and sent on short embassies to France.

In 1674, the estate of his uncle James Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, came to him by its owner's death, and the title was conferred on him the year after. In 1677, he became, by the death of his father, Earl of Dorset, and inherited the estate of his family.

In 1684, having buried his first wife, of the family of Bagot, who left him no child, he married a daughter of the Earl of Northampton, celebrated both for beauty and understanding.

He received some favourable notice from King James; but soon found it necessary to oppose the violence of his innovations, and with some other Lords appeared in Westminster-hall, to countenance the Bishops at their trial.

As enormities grew every day less supportable, he found it necessary to concur in the Revolution. He was one of those Lords who sat every day in council to preserve the publick peace, after the king's departure; and, what is not the most illustrious action of his life, was employed to conduct the



Princess Anne to Nottingham with a guard, such as might alarm the populace, as they passed, with false apprehensions of her danger. Whatever end may be designed, there is always something despicable in a trick:

He became, as may be easily supposed, a favourite of King William, who, the day after his accession, made him lord chamberlain of the household, and gave him afterwards the garter. He happened to be among those that were tossed with the King in an open boat sixteen hours, in very rough and cold weather, on the coast of Holland. His health afterwards declined; and on Jan. 19, 1705-6, he died at Bath.

He was a man whose elegance and judgement were universally confessed, and whose bounty to the learned and witty was generally known. To the indulgent affection of the publick, Lord Rochester bore ample testimony in this remark: *I know not how it is, but Lord Buckhurst may do what he will, yet is never in the wrong.*

If such a man attempted poetry, we cannot wonder that his works were praised. Dryden, whom, if Prior tells truth, he distinguished by his beneficence, and who lavished his blandishments on those who are not known to have so well deserved them, undertaking to produce authors of our own country superior to those of antiquity, says, *I would instance your Lordship in satire; and Shakspeare in tragedy.* Would it be imagined that, of this rival to antiquity, all the satires were little personal invectives, and that his longest composition was a song of eleven stanzas?

The blame, however, of this exaggerated praise falls on the encomiast, not upon the author; whose performances are, what they pretend to be, the effusions of a man of wit; gay, vigorous, and airy. His verses to Howard shew great fertility of mind, and his *Dorinda* has been imitated by Pope.

STEPNEY.

---

S T E P N E Y.

---



## S T E P N E Y.

**G**EORGE STEPNEY, descended from the Stepneys of Pendegrast in Pembrokeshire, was born at Westminster in 1663. Of his father's condition or fortune I have no account. Having received the first part of his education at Westminster, he went to Cambridge, where he continued a friendship begun at school with Mr. Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax. They came to London together, and are said to have been invited into publick life by the Duke of Dorset.

His qualifications recommended him to many foreign employments, so that his time seems to have been spent in negotiations. In 1692 he was sent envoy to the Elector of Branden-

Brandenburgh; in 1693 to the Imperial Court; in 1694 to the Elector of Saxony; in 1696 to the Electors of Mentz and Cologne, and the Congress at Francfort; in 1698 a second time to Brandenburgh; in 1699 to the King of Poland; in 1701 again to the Emperor; and in 1706 to the States General. In 1697 he was made one of the commissioners of trade. His life was busy, and not long. He died in 1707; and is buried in Westminster-Abbey with this epitaph, which *Jacob* transcribed.

H. S. E.

GEORGIUS STEPNEIUS, Armiger,

Vir

Ob Ingenii acumen,

Litararum Scientiam,

Morum Suavitatem,

Rerum Usus,

Virorum Amplissimorum Consuetudinem,

Linguae Styli ac Vitae Elegantiam,

Præclara Officia cum Britanniae tum Europæ  
præstita,

Sua ætate multum celebratus,

Apud posteros semper celebrandus;

Plurimas Legationes obiit

Ea Fide, Diligentia, ac Felicitate,

Ut Augustissimorum Principum

Gulielmii & Annæ

Spem

Spem in illo repositam  
 Nunquam fefellerit,  
 Haud raro superavit.  
 Post longum honorum Cursum  
 Brevi Temporis Spatio confectum,  
 Cum Naturæ parvæ Fama satis vixerat,  
 Animam ad altiora aspirantem placide efflavit,

On the Left Hand :

G. S.

Ex Equestri Familia Stepneiorum,  
 De Pendegrast, in Comitatu  
 Pembrochienti oriundus,  
 Westmonasterii natus est, A. D. 1663.  
 Electus in Collegium  
 Sancti Petri Westmonast. A. 1676.  
 Sancti Trinitatis Cantab. 1682.  
 Consiliariorum quibus Commercii  
 Cura commissa est 1697.  
 Chelseiæ mortuus, & comitante  
 Magna Procerum  
 Frequentia huc elatus, 1707.

It is reported that the juvenile compositions of Stepney *made grey authors blush*. I know not whether his poems will appear such wonders to the present age. One cannot always easily find the reason for which  
 I the

the world has sometimes conspired to squander praise. It is not very unlikely that he wrote very early as well as he ever wrote; and the performances of youth have many favourers, because the authors yet lay no claim to publick honours, and are therefore not considered as rivals by the distributors of fame.

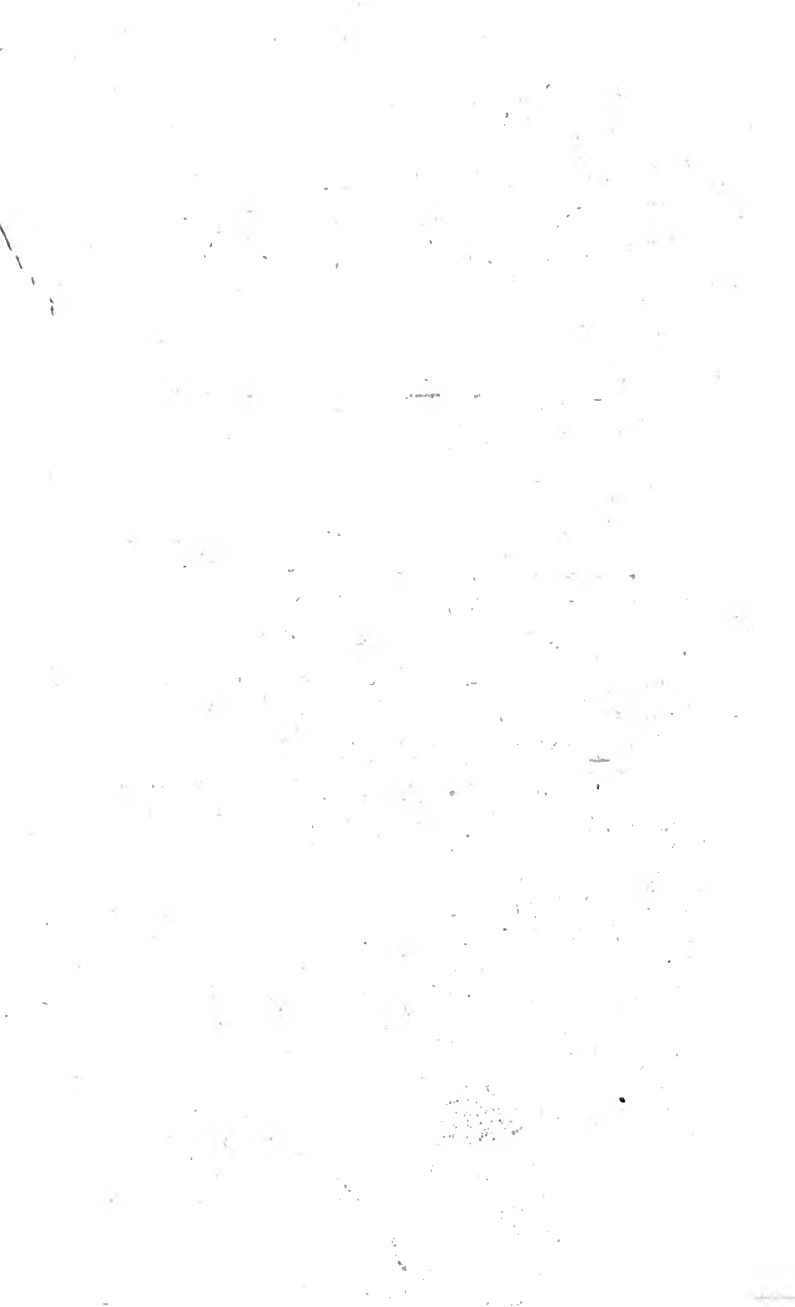
He apparently professed himself a poet, and added his name to those of the other wits in the version of Juvenal; but he is a very licentious translator, and does not recompense his neglect of the author by beauties of his own. In his original poems, now and then, a happy line may perhaps be found, and now and then a short composition may give pleasure. But there is in the whole little either of the grace of wit, or the vigour of nature.



---

J. P H I L I P S.

---



---

---

## J. P H I L I P S.

**J**OHNS PHILIPS was born on the 30th of December, 1676, at Bampton in Oxfordshire; of which place his father Dr. Stephen Philips, archdeacon of Salop, was minister. The first part of his education was domestick, after which he was sent to Winchester, where, as we are told by Dr. Sewel, his biographer, he was soon distinguished by the superiority of his exercises; and, what is less easily to be credited, so much endeared himself to his schoolfellows, by his civility and good-nature, that they, without murmur or ill-will, saw him indulged by the master with particular immunities. It is related, that, when he was at school, he seldom mingled in play with the other boys, but retired to his chamber; where

his sovereign pleasure was to sit, hour after hour, while his hair was combed by somebody, whose service he found means to procure.

At school he became acquainted with the poets ancient and modern, and fixed his attention particularly on Milton.

In 1694 he entered himself at Christchurch ; a college at that time in the highest reputation, by the transmission of Busby's scholars to the care first of *Fell*, and afterwards of *Aldrich*. Here he was distinguished as a genius eminent among the eminent, and for friendship particularly intimate with Mr. Smith, the author of *Phædra and Hippolytus*. The profession which he intended to follow was that of Physick ; and he took much delight in natural history, of which botany was his favourite part.

His reputation was confined to his friends and to the university ; till about 1703 he extended it to a wider circle by the *Splendid Shilling*, which struck the publick attention with a mode of writing new and unexpected.

This

This performance raised him so high, that when Europe resounded with the victory of Blenheim, he was, probably with an occult opposition to Addison, employed to deliver the acclamation of the Tories. It is said that he would willingly have declined the task, but that his friends urged it upon him. It appears that he wrote this poem at the house of St. John.

*Blenheim* was published in 1705. The next year produced his greatest work, the poem upon *Cider*, in two books; which was received with loud praises, and continued long to be read, as an imitation of Virgil's *Georgick*, which needed not shun the presence of the original.

He then grew probably more confident of his own abilities, and began to meditate a poem on the *Last day*; a subject on which no mind can hope to equal expectation.

This work he did not live to finish; his diseases, a slow consumption and an asthma, put a stop to his studies; and on Feb. 15,

452 J. P H I L I P S.

1708, at the beginning of his thirty-third year, put an end to his life. He was buried in the cathedral of Hereford; and Sir *Simon Harcourt*, afterwards Lord Chancellor, gave him a monument in Westminster Abbey. The inscription at Westminster was written, as I have heard, by Dr. *Atterbury*, though commonly given to Dr. *Freind*.

His Epitaph at Hereford:

J O H A N N E S P H I L I P S

Obiit 15 die Feb. Anno { Dom. 1708.  
Ætat. suæ 32.

Cujus

Offa si requiras, hanc Urnam inspice;  
Si Ingenium nescias, ipsius Opera consule;

Si Tumulum desideras,  
Templum adi *Westmonasteriense*:  
Qualis quantusque Vir fuerit,  
Dicat elegans illa & præclara,  
Quæ cenotaphium ibi decorat

Inscriptio.

Quàm interim erga Cognatos pius & officiosus,  
Testetur hoc saxum

A MARIA PHILIPS Matre ipsius pientissimâ,  
Dilecti Filii Memoriae non sine Lacrymis dicatum.

His

His Epitaph at Westminster :

Herefordiæ conduntur Offa,  
 Hoc in Delubro statuitur Imago,  
 Britanniam omnem pervagatur Fama  
 J O H A N N I S P H I L I P S :

Qui Viris bonis doctisque juxta charus,  
 Immortale suum Ingenium,  
 Eruditione multiplici excultum,  
 Miro animi candore,  
 Eximiâ morum simplicitate,  
 Honestavit.

Litterarum Amœniorum fitim,  
 Quam Wintoniæ Puer sentire cœperat,  
 Inter Ædis Christi Alumnos jugiter explevit,  
 In illo Musarum Domicilio

Præclaris Æmulorum studiis excitatus,  
 Optimis scribendi Magistris semper intentus,  
 Carmina sermone Patrio composuit

A Græcis Latinisque fontibus feliciter deducta,  
 Atticis Romanisque auribus omnino digna,

Versuum quippe Harmoniam

Rythmo didicerat.

Antiquo illo, libero, multiformi  
 Ad res ipsas apto prorsus, & attemperato,  
 Non Numeris in eundem ferè orbem redeuntibus,  
 Non Clausularum similiter cadentium sono

Metiri :

Uni in hoc laudis genere Miltono secundus,

G g 3 Primoque

Primoque pœne Par.

Res seu Tenues, seu Grandes, seu Mediocres

Ornandas sumserat,

Nusquam, quod non decuit,

Et videt, & affecutus est,

Egregius, quocunque Stylum verteret,

Fandi author, & Modorum artifex.

Fas sit Huic,

Auso licet à tuâ Metrorum Lege discedere

O Pœsis Anglicanæ Pater, atque Conditor Chaucere,

Alterum tibi latus claudere,

Vatum certe Cineres, tuos undique stipantium

Non dedecebit Chorū.

SIMON HARCOURT Miles,

Viri benè de se, de Litteris meriti

Quoad viveret Fauctor,

Post Obitum piè memor,

Hoc illi Saxum poni voluit.

J. PHILIPS, STEPHANI, S. T. P. Archidiaconi

Salop, Filius, natus est Bamptoniæ

in agro Oxon. Dec. 30, 1676.

Obiit Herefordiæ, Feb. 15, 1708.

Philips has been always praised, without contradiction, as a man modest, blameless, and pious; who bore a narrow fortune without discontent, and tedious and painful maladies without impatience; beloved by those that knew him, but not ambitious to be known.



known. He was probably not formed for a wide circle. His conversation is commended for its innocent gaiety, which seems to have flowed only among his intimates; for I have been told, that he was in company silent and barren, and employed only upon the pleasures of his pipe. His addiction to tobacco is mentioned by one of his biographers, who remarks that in all his writings, except *Blenheim*, he has found an opportunity of celebrating the fragrant fume. In common life he was probably one of those who please by not offending, and whose person was loved because his writings were admired. He died honoured and lamented, before any part of his reputation had withered, and before his patron St. John had disgraced him.

His works are few. The *Splendid Shilling* has the uncommon merit of an original design, unless it may be thought precluded by the ancient *Centos*. To degrade the founding words and stately construction of Milton, by an application to the lowest and most trivial things, gratifies the mind with a momentary triumph over that grandeur which hitherto held its captives in admiration; the

words and things are presented with a new appearance, and novelty is always grateful where it gives no pain.

But the merit of such performances begins and ends with the first author. He that should again adapt Milton's phrase to the gross incidents of common life, and even adapt it with more art, which would not be difficult, must yet expect but a small part of the praise which Philips has obtained; he can only hope to be considered as the repeater of a jest.

"The parody on Milton," says Gildon, "is the only tolerable production of its author." This is a censure too dogmatical and violent. The poem of *Blenheim* was never denied to be tolerable, even by those who do not allow it supreme excellence. It is indeed the poem of a scholar, *all inexpert of war*; of a man who writes books from books, and studies the world in a college. He seems to have formed his ideas of the field of *Blenheim* from the battles of the heroick ages, or the tales of chivalry, with very little comprehension of the qualities necessary to the composition of a modern  
2
hero,

hero, which Addison has displayed with so much propriety. He makes *Marlborough* behold at distance the slaughter made by *Tallard*, then haste to encounter and restrain him, and mow his way through ranks made headless by his sword.

He imitates Milton's numbers indeed, but imitates them very injudiciously. Deformity is easily copied; and whatever there is in Milton which the reader wishes away, all that is obsolete, peculiar, or licentious, is accumulated with great care by Philips. Milton's verse was harmonious, in proportion to the general state of our metre in Milton's age; and, if he had written after the improvements made by Dryden, it is reasonable to believe that he would have admitted a more pleasing modulation of numbers into his work; but Philips sits down with a resolution to make no more musick than he found; to want all that his master wanted, though he is very far from having what his master had. Those asperities, therefore, that are venerable in the *Paradise Lost* are contemptible in the *Blenheim*.

There

There is a Latin ode written to his patron St. John, in return for a present of wine and tobacco, which cannot be passed without notice. It is gay, and elegant, and exhibits several artful accomodations of classick expressions to new purposes. It seems better turned than the odes of *Hannes* \*.

To the poem on *Cider*, written in imitation of the *Georgicks*, may be given this peculiar praise, that it is grounded in truth; that the precepts which it contains are exact and just; and that it is therefore, at once, a book of entertainment and of science. This I was told by Miller, the great gardener and botanist, whose expression was, that *there were many books written on the same subject in prose, which do not contain so much truth as that poem.*

\* This ode I am willing to mention, because there seems to be an error in all the printed copies, which is, I find, retained in the last. They all read;

Quam Gratiarum cura decentium  
O! O! labellis cui Venus infidet.

The author probably wrote,

Quam Gratiarum cura decentium  
Ornat; labellis cui Venus infidet.

In

In the disposition of his matter, so as to intersperse precepts relating to the culture of trees, with sentiments more generally pleasing, and in easy and graceful transitions from one subject to another, he has very diligently imitated his master; but he unhappily pleased himself with blank verse, and supposed that the numbers of Milton, which impress the mind with veneration, combined as they are with subjects of inconceivable grandeur, could be sustained by images which at most can rise only to elegance. Contending angels may shake the regions of heaven in blank verse; but the flow of equal measures, and the embellishment of rhyme, must recommend to our attention the art of engrafting, and decide the merit of the *redstreak* and *pear-main*.

What study could confer, Philips had obtained; but natural deficiency cannot be supplied. He seems not born to greatness and elevation. He is never lofty, nor does he often surprise with unexpected excellence; but perhaps to his last poem may be applied what

Tully

Tully said of the work of Lucretius, that *it is written with much art, though with few blazes of genius.*

---

The following Fragment, written by Edmund Smith, upon the works of Philips, has been transcribed from the Bodleian manuscripts.

“ A prefatory Discourse to the Poem on Mr. Philips, with a character of his writings.

“ I T is altogether as equitable some account should be given of those who have distinguished themselves by their writings, as of those who are renowned for great actions. It is but reasonable they, who contribute so much to the immortality of others, should have some share in it themselves; and since their genius only is discovered by their works, it is just that their virtues should be recorded by their friends. For no modest men (as the person I write of was in perfection)

tion) will write their own panegyricks; and it is very hard that they should go without reputation, only because they the more deserve it. The end of writing Lives is for the imitation of the readers. It will be in the power of very few to imitate the duke of Marlborough; we must be content with admiring his great qualities and actions, without hopes of following them. The private and social virtues are more easily transcribed. The Life of Cowley is more instructive, as well as more fine, than any we have in our language. And it is to be wished, since Mr. Philips had so many of the good qualities of that poet, that I had some of the abilities of his historian.

The Grecian philosophers have had their Lives written, their morals commended, and their sayings recorded. Mr. Philips had all the virtues to which most of them only pretended, and all their integrity without any of their affectation.

The French are very just to eminent men in this point; not a learned man nor a poet can die, but all Europe must be acquainted with

with his accomplishments. They give praise and expect it in their turns : they commend their Patru's and Moliere's as well as their Conde's and Turenne's ; their Pellifons and Racines have their elogies as well as the prince whom they celebrate ; and their poems, their mercuries, and orations, nay their very gazettes, are filled with the praises of the learned.

I am fatisfied, had they a Philips among them, and known how to value him ; had they one of his learning, his temper, but above all of that particular turn of humour, that altogether new genius, he had been an example to their poets, and a subject of their panegyricks, and perhaps set in competition with the ancients, to whom only he ought to submit.

I shall therefore endeavour to do justice to his memory, since nobody else undertakes it. And indeed I can assign no cause why so many of his acquaintance (that are as willing and more able than myself to give an account of him) should forbear to celebrate the memory of one so dear to them, but only that



that they look upon it as a work intirely belonging to me.

I shall content myself with giving only a character of the person and his writings, without meddling with the transactions of his life, which was altogether private: I shall only make this known observation of his family, that there was scarce so many extraordinary men in any one. I have been acquainted with five of his brothers (of which three are still living), all men of fine parts, yet all of a very unlike temper and genius. So that their fruitful mother, like the mother of the gods, seems to have produced a numerous offspring, all of different though uncommon faculties. Of the living, neither their modesty nor the humour of the present age permits me to speak: of the dead, I may say something.

One of them had made the greatest progress in the study of the law of nature and nations of any one I know. He had perfectly mastered, and even improved, the notions of Grotius, and the more refined ones of Puffendorf. He could refute Hobbes with

as much solidity as some of greater name, and expose him with as much wit as Echard. That noble study, which requires the greatest reach of reason and nicety of distinction, was not at all difficult to him. 'Twas a national loss to be deprived of one who understood a science so necessary, and yet so unknown in England. I shall add only, he had the same honesty and sincerity as the person I write of, but more heat: the former was more inclined to argue, the later to divert: one employed his reason more; the other his imagination: the former had been well qualified for those posts, which the modesty of the latter made him refuse. His other dead brother would have been an ornament to the college of which he was a member. He had a genius either for poetry or oratory; and, though very young, composed several very agreeable pieces. In all probability he would have wrote as finely, as his brother did nobly. He might have been the Waller, as the other was the Milton of his time. The one might celebrate Marlborough, the other his beautiful offspring. This had not been so fit to describe the actions of heroes as the virtues of

of private men. In a word, he had been fitter for my place : and while his brother was writing upon the greatest men that any age ever produced, in a style equal to them, he might have served as a panegyrist on him.

This is all I think necessary to say of his family. I shall proceed to himself and his writings; which I shall first treat of, because I know they are censured by some out of envy, and more out of ignorance.

The *Splendid Shilling*, which is far the least considerable, has the more general reputation, and perhaps hinders the character of the rest. The style agreed so well with the burlesque, that the ignorant thought it could become nothing else. Every body is pleased with that work. But to judge rightly of the other, requires a perfect mastery of poetry and criticism, a just contempt of the little turns and witticisms now in vogue, and, above all, a perfect understanding of poetical diction and description.

All that have any taste of poetry will agree, that the great burlesque is much to be preferred to the low. It is much easier to make a great thing appear little, than a little one great: Cotton and others of a very low genius have done the former; but Philips, Garth, and Boileau only the latter.

A picture in miniature is every painter's talent; but a piece for a cupola, where all the figures are enlarged, yet proportioned to the eye, requires a master's hand.

It must still be more acceptable than the low burlesque, because the images of the latter are mean and filthy, and the language itself entirely unknown to all men of good breeding. The style of Billingsgate would not make a very agreeable figure at St. James's. A gentleman would take but little pleasure in language, which he would think it hard to be accosted in, or in reading words which he could not pronounce without blushing. The lofty burlesque is the more to be admired, because, to write it, the author must be master of two of the most different talents in nature.

nature. A talent to find out and expose what is ridiculous, is very different from that which is to raise and elevate. We must read Virgil and Milton for the one, and Horace and Hudibras for the other. We know that the authors of excellent comedies have often failed in the grave style, and the tragedian as often in comedy. Admiration and Laughter are of such opposite natures, that they are seldom created by the same person: The man of mirth is always observing the follies and weaknesses, the serious writer the virtues or crimes of mankind; one is pleased with contemplating a beau, the other a hero. Even from the same object they would draw different ideas: Achilles would appear in very different lights to Thersites and Alexander. The one would admire the courage and greatness of his soul; the other would ridicule the vanity and rashness of his temper: As the satyrist says to Hanibal :

—I curre per Alpes,  
Ut pueris placeas, & declamatio fias.

The contrariety of style to the subject pleases the more strongly, because it is more surprising; the expectation of the reader is

pleasantly deceived, who expects an humble style from the subject, or a great subject from the style. It pleases the more universally, because it is agreeable to the taste both of the grave and the merry; but more particularly so to those who have a relish of the best writers, and the noblest sort of poetry. I shall produce only one passage out of this poet, which is the misfortune of his Galligaskins:

My Galligaskins, which have long withstood  
The winter's fury and encroaching frosts,  
By time subdued (what will not time subdue!)

This is admirably pathetic, and shews very well the vicissitudes of sublunary things. The rest goes on to a prodigious height; and a man in Greenland could hardly have made a more pathetick and terrible complaint. Is it not surprising that the subject should be so mean, and the verse so pompous? that the least things in his poetry, as in a microscope, should grow great and formidable to the eye? especially considering that, not understanding French, he had no model for his style? that he should have no writer to imitate, and  
I himself

himself be inimitable? that he should do all this before he was twenty? at an age, which is usually pleased with a glare of false thoughts, little turns, and unnatural fustian? at an age, at which Cowley, Dryden, and I had almost said Virgil, were inconsiderable? So soon was his imagination at its full strength, his judgement ripe, and his humour complete.

This poem was written for his own diversion, without any design of publication. It was communicated but to *me*; but soon spread, and fell into the hands of pirates. It was put out, vilely mangled, by Ben. Bragge; *and impudently said to be corrected by the author.* This grievance is now grown more epidemical; and no man now has a right to his own thoughts, or a title to his own writings. Xenophon answered the Persian, who demanded his arms, “ We have nothing now  
 “ left but our arms and our valour; if we  
 “ surrender the one, how shall we make  
 “ use of the other?” Poets have nothing but their wits and their writings; and if they are plundered of the latter, I don’t see what good the former can do them. To pirate,

H h 3 and

and publickly own it, to prefix their names to the works they steal, to own and avow the theft, I believe, was never yet heard of but in England. It will sound oddly to posterity, that, in a polite nation, in an enlightened age, under the direction of the most wise, most learned, and most generous encouragers of knowledge in the world, the property of a mechanick should be better secured than that of a scholar; that the poorest manual operations should be more valued than the noblest products of the brain; that it should be felony to rob a cobbler of a pair of shoes, and no crime to deprive the best author of his whole subsistence; that nothing should make a man a sure title to his own writings but the stupidity of them; that the works of Dryden should meet with less encouragement than those of his own Fletche, or Blackmore; that Tillotson and St. George, Tom Thumb and Temple, should be set on an equal foot. This is the reason why this very paper has been so long delayed; and while the most impudent and scandalous libels are publickly vended by the pirates, this innocent work is forced to steal abroad as if it were a libel.



Our present writers are by these wretches reduced to the same condition Virgil was, when the centurion seized on his estate. But I don't doubt but I can fix upon the Mæcenas of the present age, that will retrieve them from it. But, whatever effect this piracy may have upon us, it contributed very much to the advantage of Mr. Philips; it helped him to a reputation, which he neither desired nor expected, and to the honour of being put upon a work of which he did not think himself capable; but the event shewed his modesty. And it was reasonable to hope, that he, who could raise mean subjects so high, should still be more elevated on greater themes; that he, that could draw such noble ideas from a shilling, could not fail upon such a subject as the duke of Marlborough, *which is capable of heightening even the most low and trifling genius*. And, indeed, most of the great works which have been produced in the world have been owing less to the poet than the patron. Men of the greatest genius are sometimes lazy, and want a spur; often modest, and dare not venture in publick; they certainly know their faults in the worst

things; and even their best things they are not fond of, because the idea of what they ought to be is far above what they are. This induced me to believe that Virgil desired his work might be burnt, had not the same Augustus that desired him to write them, preserved them from destruction. A scribbling beau may imagine a Poet *may* be induced to write, by the very pleasure he finds in writing; but that is seldom, when people are necessitated to it. I have known men row, and use very hard labour, for diversion, which, if they had been tied to, they would have thought themselves very unhappy.

But to return to *Blenheim*, that work so much admired by some, and censured by others. I have often wished he had wrote it in Latin, that he might be out of the reach of the empty criticks, who would have as little understood his meaning in that language as they do his beauties in his own.

False criticks have been the plague of all ages; Milton himself, in a very polite court, has been compared to the rumbling of a wheel-barrow; he had been on the wrong  
side,

side, and therefore could not be a good poet.  
*And this, perhaps, may be Mr. Philips's case.*

But I take generally the ignorance of his readers to be the occasion of their dislike. People that have formed their taste upon the French writers, can have no relish for Philips: they admire points and turns, and consequently have no judgement of what is great and majestick: he must look little in their eyes, when he soars so high as to be almost out of their view. I cannot therefore allow any admirer of the French to be a judge of Blenheim, nor any who takes Bouhours for a compleat critick. He generally judges of the ancients by the moderns, and not the moderns by the ancients; he takes those passages of their own authors to be really sublime which come the nearest to it; he often calls that a noble and great thought which is only a pretty and fine one, and has more instances of the sublime out of Ovid de Tristibus, than he has out of all Virgil.

I shall allow, therefore, only those to be judges of Philips, who make the ancients, and particularly Virgil, their standard.

But,

But, before I enter on this subject, I shall consider what is particular in the style of Philips, and examine what ought to be the style of heroick poetry, and next inquire how far he is come up to that style.

His style is particular; because he lays aside rhyme, and writes in blank verse, and uses old words, and frequently postpones the adjective to the substantive, and the substantive to the verb; and leaves out little particles, *a*, and *the*; *her*, and *his*; and uses frequent appositions. Now let us examine, whether these alterations of style be conformable to the true sublime.



---

W A L S H.

---



---



---

W A L S H.

**W**ILLIAM WALSH, the son of Joseph Walsh, Esq; of Abberley in Worcestershire, was born in 1663, as appears from the account of Wood; who relates, that at the age of fifteen he became, in 1678, a gentleman commoner of Wadham College.

• He left the university without a degree, and pursued his studies in London and at home; that he studied, in whatever place, is apparent from the effect; for he became, in Mr. Dryden's opinion, *the best critick in the nation*.

He was not, however, merely a critick or a scholar. He was likewise a member of parliament and a courtier, knight of the shire  
for

for his native county in several parliaments ; in another the representative of Richmond in Yorkshire ; and gentleman of the horse to Queen Anne under the duke of Somerset.

Some of his verses shew him to have been a zealous friend to the Revolution ; but his political ardour did not abate his reverence or kindness for Dryden, to whom he gave a Dissertation on Virgil's Pastorals, in which, however studied, he discovers some ignorance of the laws of French versification.

In 1705, he began to correspond with Mr. Pope, in whom he discovered very early the power of poetry. Their letters are written upon the pastoral comedy of the Italians, and those pastorals which Pope was then preparing to publish.

The kindnesses which are first experienced are seldom forgotten. Pope always retained a grateful memory of Walsh's notice, and mentioned him in one of his latter pieces among those that had encouraged his juvenile studies :

—Granville the polite,  
And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write.



In his Essay on Criticism he had given him more splendid praise, and, in the opinion of his learned commentator, sacrificed a little of his judgement to his gratitude.

The time of his death I have not learned. It must have happened between 1707, when he wrote to Pope; and 1711, when Pope praised him in the Essay. The epitaph makes him forty-six years old: if Wood's account be right, he died in 1709.

He is known more by his familiarity with greater men, than by any thing done or written by himself.

His works are not numerous. In prose he wrote *Eugenia, a defence of women*; which Dryden honoured with a Preface.

*Esculapius, or the Hospital of Fools*, published after his death.

*A Collection of Letters and Poems, amorous and gallant*, was published in the volumes called Dryden's Miscellany, and some other occasional pieces.

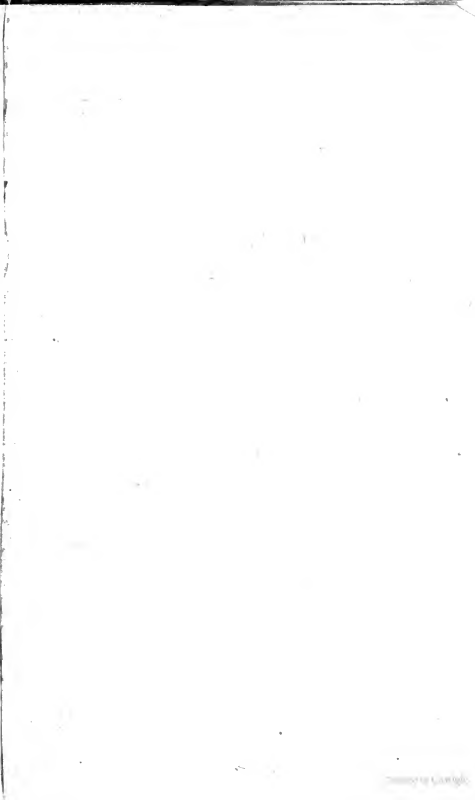
To

To his Poems and Letters is prefixed a very judicious preface upon Epistolary Composition and Amorous Poetry.

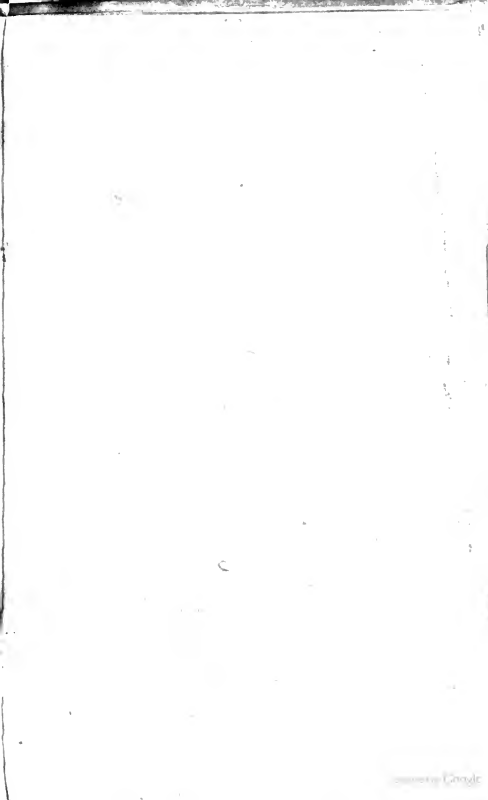
In his *Golden Age restored*, there was something of humour, when the facts were recent; but it now strikes no longer. In his imitation of Horace, the first stanzas are happily turned; and in all his writings there are pleasing passages. He has however more elegance than vigour, and seldom rises higher than to be pretty.

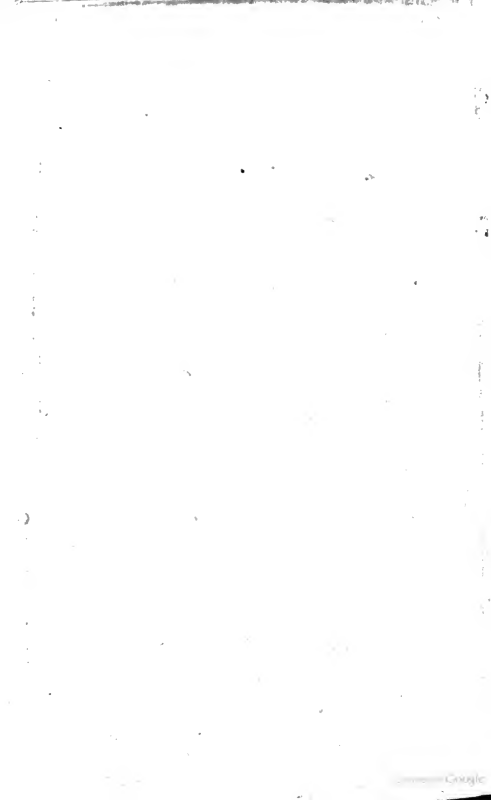
END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

V91  
154 9684









17.  
xg. ~~5~~ 13

U  
C  
C  
C



